Alcott
My boys

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"As there was nobody to see, he just sat down and cried as hard as Dotty herself."

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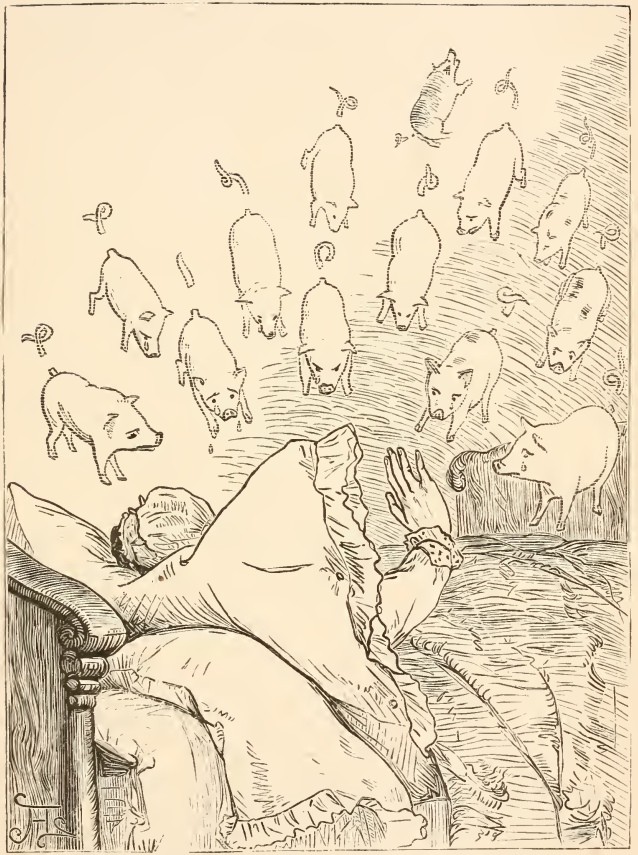
"Sing, Tessa; sing!" cried Tommo, twanging away with all his might. — Page 47.



"The memory of those thirteen pink tails has haunted me ever since." — PAGE 9.

AUNT JO'S SCRAP-BAG.

MY BOYS, ETC.

BY LOUISA M. ALCOTT,

AUTHOR OF "LITTLE WOMEN," "AN OLD-FASHIONED GIRL," "LITTLE MEN," "HOSPITAL SKETCHES."

BOSTON:
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PREFACE.

AS grandmothers rummage their piece-bags and bundles in search of gay odds and ends to make gifts with which to fill the little stockings that hang all in a row on Christmas Eve, so I have gathered together some stories, old and new, to amuse the large family that has so rapidly and beautifully grown up about me.

I hope that when they promenade in night-caps and gowns to rifle the plump stockings, the little "dears" will utter an "Oh!" of pleasure, and give a prance of satisfaction, as they pull out this small gift from Aunt Jo's scrap-bag.

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS,
1871–72.

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Boston.

AUNT JO'S SCRAP-BAG.

MY BOYS.

FEELING that I have been unusually fortunate in my knowledge of a choice and pleasing variety of this least appreciated portion of the human race, I have a fancy to record some of my experiences, hoping that it may awaken an interest in other minds, and cause other people to cultivate the delightful, but too often neglected boys, who now run to waste, so to speak.

I have often wondered what they thought of the peculiar treatment they receive, even at the hands of their nearest friends. While they are rosy, roly-poly little fellows they are petted and praised, adorned and adored, till it is a miracle that they are not utterly ruined. But the moment they outgrow their babyhood their trials begin, and they are re-

garded as nuisances till they are twenty-one, when they are again received into favor.

Yet that very time of neglect is the period when they most need all manner of helps, and ought to have them. I like boys and oysters raw; so, though good manners are always pleasing, I don't mind the rough outside burr which repels most people, and perhaps that is the reason why the burrs open and let me see the soft lining and taste the sweet nut hidden inside.

My first well-beloved boy was a certain Frank, to whom I clung at the age of seven with a devotion which I fear he did not appreciate. There were six girls in the house, but I would have nothing to say to them, preferring to tag after Frank, and perfectly happy when he allowed me to play with him. I regret to say that the small youth was something of a tyrant, and one of his favorite amusements was trying to make me cry by slapping my hands with books, hoop-sticks, shoes, any thing that came along capable of giving a good stinging blow. I believe I endured these marks of friendship with the fortitude of a young Indian, and felt fully repaid for a blistered

palm by hearing Frank tell the other boys "She 's a brave little thing, and you can't make her cry."

My chief joy was in romping with him in the long galleries of a piano manufactory behind our house. What bliss it was to mount one of the cars on which the workmen rolled heavy loads from room to room, and to go thundering down the inclined planes, regardless of the crash that usually awaited us at the bottom! If I could have played foot-ball on the Common with my Frank and Billy Babcock, life could have offered me no greater joy at that period. As the prejudices of society forbid this sport, I revenged myself by driving hoop all around the mall without stopping, which the boys could *not* do.

I can remember certain happy evenings, when we snuggled in sofa corners and planned tricks and ate stolen goodies, and sometimes Frank would put his curly head in my lap and let me stroke it when he was tired. What the girls did I don't recollect; their domestic plays were not to my taste, and the only figure that stands out from the dimness of the past is that jolly boy with a twinkling eye. This

memory would be quite radiant but for one sad thing, — a deed that cut me to the soul then, and which I have never quite forgiven in all these years.

On one occasion I did something very naughty, and when called up for judgment fled to the dining-room, locked the door, and from my stronghold defied the whole world. I could have made my own terms, for it was near dinner-time and the family must eat; but, alas, for the treachery of the human heart! Frank betrayed me. He climbed in at the window, unlocked the door, and delivered me up to the foe. Nay, he even defended the base act, and helped bear the struggling culprit to imprisonment. That nearly broke my heart, for I believed *he* would stand by me as staunchly as I always stood by him. It was a sad blow, and I couldn't love or trust him any more. Peanuts and candy, ginger-snaps and car-rides were unavailing; even foot-ball could not reunite the broken friendship, and to this day I recollect the pang that entered my little heart when I lost my faith in the loyalty of my first boy.

The second attachment was of quite a different

sort, and had a happier ending. At the mature age of ten, I left home for my first visit to a family of gay and kindly people in — well, why not say right out? — Providence. There were no children, and at first I did not mind this, as every one petted me, especially one of the young men named Christopher. So kind and patient, yet so merry was this good Christy that I took him for my private and particular boy, and loved him dearly, for he got me out of innumerable scrapes, and never was tired of amusing the restless little girl who kept the family in a fever of anxiety by her pranks. *He* never laughed at her mishaps and mistakes, never played tricks upon her like a certain William who composed the most trying nicknames, and wickedly goaded the wild visitor into all manner of naughtiness. Christy stood up for her through every thing; let her ride the cows, feed the pigs, bang on the piano, and race all over the spice mill, feasting on cinnamon and cloves; brought her down from housetops and fished her out of brooks; never scolded, and never seemed tired of the troublesome friendship of little Torment.

In a week I had exhausted every amusement and was desperately homesick. It has always been my opinion that I should have been speedily restored to the bosom of my family but for Christy, and but for him I should assuredly have ran away before the second week was out. He kept me, and in the hour of my disgrace stood by me like a man and a brother.

One afternoon, inspired by a spirit of benevolence, enthusiastic but short-sighted, I collected several poor children in the barn and regaled them on cake and figs, helping myself freely to the treasures of the pantry without asking leave, meaning to explain afterward. Being discovered before the supplies were entirely exhausted, the patience of the long-suffering matron gave out, and I was ordered up to the garret to reflect upon my sins, and the pleasing prospect of being sent home with the character of the worst child ever known.

My sufferings were deep as I sat upon a fuzzy little trunk all alone in the dull garret, thinking how hard it was to do right, and wondering why I was

scolded for feeding the poor when we were expressly bidden to do so. I felt myself an outcast, and bewailed the disgrace I had brought upon my family. Nobody could possibly love such a bad child; and if the mice were to come and eat me then and there, — a la Bishop Hatto, — it would only be a relief to my friends. At this dark moment I heard Christy say below, "She meant it kindly, so I wouldn't mind, Fanny;" and then up came my boy full of sympathy and comfort. Seeing the tragic expression of my face, he said not a word, but, sitting down in an old chair, took me on his knee and held me close and quietly, letting the action speak for itself. It did most eloquently; for the kind arm seemed to take me back from that dreadful exile, and the friendly face to assure me without words that I had not sinned beyond forgiveness.

I had not shed a tear before, but now I cried tempestuously, and clung to him like a shipwrecked little mariner in a storm. Neither spoke, but he held me fast and let me cry myself to sleep; for, when the shower was over, a pensive peace fell upon

me, and the dim old garret seemed not a prison, but a haven of refuge, since my boy came to share it with me. How long I slept I don't know, but it must have been an hour, at least; yet my good Christy never stirred, only waited patiently till I woke up in the twilight and was not afraid because he was there. He took me down as meek as a mouse, and kept me by him all that trying evening, screening me from jokes, rebukes, and sober looks; and when I went to bed he came up to kiss me, and to assure me that this awful circumstance should not be reported at home. This took a load off my heart, and I remember fervently thanking him, and telling him I never would forget it.

I never have, though he died long ago, and others have probably forgotten all about the naughty prank. I often longed to ask him how he knew the surest way to win a child's heart by the patience, sympathy, and tender little acts that have kept his memory green for nearly thirty years.

Cy was a comrade after my own heart, and for a summer or two we kept the neighborhood in a fer-

ment by our adventures and hair-breadth escapes. I think I never knew a boy so full of mischief, and my opportunities of judging have been manifold. He did not get into scrapes himself, but possessed a splendid talent for deluding others into them, and then morally remarking, "There, I told you so!" His way of saying "You dars'nt do this or that," was like fire to powder; and why I still live in the possession of all my limbs and senses is a miracle to those who know my youthful friendship with Cy. It was he who incited me to jump off of the highest beam in the barn to be borne home on a board with a pair of sprained ankles. It was he who dared me to rub my eyes with red peppers, and then sympathizingly led me home blind and roaring with pain. It was he who solemnly assured me that all the little pigs would die in agony if their tails were not cut off, and won me to hold thirteen little squealers while the operation was performed. Those thirteen innocent pink tails haunt me yet, and the memory of that deed has given me a truly Jewish aversion to pork.

I did not know him long, but he was a kindred soul, and must have a place in my list of boys. He is a big, brown man now, and having done his part in the war, is at work on his farm. We meet sometimes, and though we try to be dignified and proper, it is quite impossible; there is a sly twinkle in Cy's eye that upsets my gravity, and we always burst out laughing at the memory of our early frolics.

My Augustus! oh, my Augustus! my first little lover, and the most romantic of my boys. At fifteen I met this charming youth, and thought I had found my fate. It was at a spelling school in a little country town where I, as a stranger and visitor from the city, was an object of interest. Painfully conscious of this fact, I sat in a corner trying to look easy and elegant, with a large red bow under my chin, and a carnelian ring in full view. Among the boys and girls who frolicked about me, I saw one lad of seventeen with "large blue eyes, a noble brow, and a beautiful straight nose," as I described him in a letter to my sister. This attractive youth had a certain air of refinement and ease of manner

that the others lacked; and when I found he was the minister's son, I felt that I might admire him without loss of dignity. "Imagine my sensations," as Miss Burney's Evelina says, when this boy came and talked to me, a little bashfully at first, but soon quite freely, and invited me to a huckleberry party next day. I had observed that he was one of the best spellers. I also observed that his language was quite elegant; he even quoted Byron, and rolled his eyes in a most engaging manner, not to mention that he asked who gave me my ring, and said he depended on escorting me to the berry pasture.

Dear me, how interesting it was! and when I found myself, next day, sitting under a tree in the sunny field (full of boys and girls, all more or less lovering), with the amiable Augustus at my feet, gallantly supplying me with bushes to strip while we talked about books and poetry, I really felt as if I had got into a novel, and enjoyed it immensely. I believe a dim idea that Gus was sentimental hovered in my mind, but I would not encourage it, though I laughed in my sleeve when he was spouting Latin for my

benefit, and was uncertain whether to box his ears or simper later in the day, when he languished over the gate, and said he thought chestnut hair the loveliest in the world.

Poor, dear boy! how innocent and soft-hearted and full of splendid dreams he was, and what deliciously romantic times we had floating on the pond, while the frogs sung to his accordion, as he tried to say unutterable things with his honest blue eyes. It makes me shiver now to think of the mosquitoes and the damp; but it was Pauline and Claude Melnotte then, and when I went home we promised to be true to one another, and write every week during the year he was away at school.

We parted, — not in tears by any means; that sort of nonsense comes later, when the romance is less childish, — but quite jolly and comfortable, and I hastened to pour forth the thrilling tale to my faithful sister, who approved of the match, being a perfect "mush of sentiment" herself.

I fear it was not a very ardent flame, however, for Gus did not write every week, and I did not care a

bit; nevertheless, I kept his picture and gave it a sentimental sigh when I happened to think of it, while he sent messages now and then, and devoted himself to his studies like an ambitious boy as he was. I hardly expected to see him again, but soon after the year was out, to my great surprise he called. I was so fluttered by the appearance of his card that I rather lost my head, and did such a silly thing that it makes me laugh even now. He liked chestnut hair, and, pulling out my combs, I rushed down, theatrically dishevelled, hoping to impress my lover with my ardor and my charms.

I expected to find little Gus; but, to my great confusion, a tall being with a beaver in his hand rose to meet me, looking so big and handsome and generally imposing, that I could not recover myself for several minutes, and mentally wailed for my combs, feeling like an untidy simpleton.

I don't know whether he thought me a little cracked or not, but he was very friendly and pleasant, and told me his plans, and hoped I would make another visit, and smoothed his beaver, and let me

see his tail-coat, and behaved himself like a dear, conceited, clever boy. He did not allude to our love-passages, being shy, and I blessed him for it; for really, I don't know what rash thing I might have done under the exciting circumstances. Just as he was going, however, he forgot his cherished hat for a minute, put out both hands, and said heartily, with his old boyish laugh, —

"Now you will come, and we'll go boating and berrying, and all the rest of it again, won't we?"

The blue eyes were full of fun and feeling, too, I fancied, as I blushingly retired behind my locks and gave the promise. But I never went, and never saw my little lover any more, for in a few weeks he was dead of a fever, brought on by too much study, — and so ended the sad history of my fourth boy.

After this, for many years, I was a boyless being; but was so busy I did not feel my destitute condition till I went to the hospital during the war, and found my little sergeant. His story has been told elsewhere, but the sequel to it is a pleasant one, for Baby B. still writes to me now and then, asks

advice about his future, and gladdens me with good news of his success as a business man in Kansas.

As if to atone for the former dearth, a sudden shower of most superior boys fell upon me, after I recovered from my campaign. Some of the very best sort it was my fortune to know and like, — real gentlemen, yet boys still, — and jolly times they had, stirring up the quiet old town with their energetic society.

There was W., a stout, amiable youth, who would stand in the middle of a strawberry patch, with his hands in his pockets, and let us feed him luxuriously. B., a delightful scapegrace, who came once a week to confess his sins, beat his breast in despair, vow awful vows of repentance, and then cheerfully depart, to break every one of them in the next twenty-four hours. S. the gentle-hearted giant; J. the dandy; sober, sensible B.; and E., the young knight without reproach or fear.

But my especial boy of the batch was A., — proud and cold and shy to other people, sad and serious sometimes when his good heart and tender con-

science showed him his short-comings, but so grateful for sympathy and a kind word.

I could not get at him as easily as I could the other lads, but, thanks to Dickens, I found him out at last.

We played Dolphus and Sophy Tetterby in the "Haunted Man," at one of the school festivals; and during the rehearsals I discovered that my Dolphus was — permit the expression, oh, well-bred readers! — a trump. What fun we had, to be sure, acting the droll and pathetic scenes together, with a swarm of little Tetterbys skirmishing about us! From that time he has been my Dolphus and I his Sophy, and my yellow-haired laddie don't forget me, though he has a younger Sophy now, and some small Tetterbys of his own. He writes just the same affectionate letters as he used to do, though I, less faithful, am too busy to answer them.

But the best and dearest of all my flock was my Polish boy, Ladislas Wisniewski, — two hiccoughs and a sneeze will give you the name perfectly. Six years ago, as I went down to my early

breakfast at our Pension in Vevey, I saw that a stranger had arrived. He was a tall youth, of eighteen or twenty, with a thin, intelligent face, and the charmingly polite manners of a foreigner. As the other boarders came in, one by one, they left the door open, and a draught of cold autumn air blew in from the stone corridor, making the new comer cough, shiver, and cast wistful glances toward the warm corner by the stove. My place was there, and the heat often oppressed me, so I was glad of an opportunity to move.

A word to Madame Vodoz effected the change; and at dinner I was rewarded by a grateful smile from the poor fellow, as he nestled into his warm seat, after a pause of surprise and a flush of pleasure at the small kindness from a stranger. We were too far apart to talk much, but, as he filled his glass, the Pole bowed to me, and said low in French, —

"I drink the good health to Mademoiselle."

I returned the wish, but he shook his head with a sudden shadow on his face, as if the words meant more than mere compliment to him.

"That boy is sick and needs care. I must see to him," said I to myself, as I met him in the afternoon, and observed the military look of his blue and white suit, as he touched his cap and smiled pleasantly. I have a weakness for brave boys in blue, and having discovered that he had been in the late Polish Revolution, my heart warmed to him at once.

That evening he came to me in the salon, and expressed his thanks in the prettiest broken English I ever heard. So simple, frank, and grateful was he that a few words of interest won his little story from him, and in half an hour we were friends. With his fellow-students he had fought through the last outbreak, had suffered imprisonment and hardship rather than submit, had lost many friends, his fortune and his health, and at twenty, lonely, poor, and ill, was trying bravely to cure the malady which seemed fatal.

"If I recover myself of this affair in the chest, I teach the music to acquire my bread in this so hospitable country. At Paris, my friends, all two, find a refuge, and I go to them in spring if I die

not here. Yes, it is solitary, and my memories are not gay, but I have my work, and the good God remains always to me, so I content myself with much hope, and I wait."

Such genuine piety and courage increased my respect and regard immensely, and a few minutes later he added to both by one of the little acts that show character better than words.

He told me about the massacre, when five hundred Poles were shot down by Cossacks in the market-place, merely because they sung their national hymn.

"Play me that forbidden air," I said, wishing to judge of his skill, for I had heard him practising softly in the afternoon.

He rose willingly, then glanced about the room and gave a little shrug which made me ask what he wanted.

"I look to see if the Baron is here. He is Russian, and to him my national air will not be pleasing."

"Then play it. He dare not forbid it here, and I should rather enjoy that little insult to your bitter

enemy," said I, feeling very indignant with every thing Russian just then.

"Ah, mademoiselle, it is true we are enemies, but we are also gentlemen," returned the boy, proving that *he* at least was one.

I thanked him for his lesson in politeness, and as the Baron was not there he played the beautiful hymn, singing it enthusiastically in spite of the danger to his weak lungs. A true musician evidently, for, as he sung his pale face glowed, his eyes shone, and his lost vigor seemed restored to him.

From that evening we were fast friends; for the memory of certain dear lads at home made my heart open to this lonely boy, who gave me in return the most grateful affection and service. He begged me to call him "Varjo," as his mother did. He constituted himself my escort, errand-boy, French teacher, and private musician, making those weeks infinitely pleasant by his winning ways, his charming little confidences, and faithful friendship.

We had much fun over our lessons, for I helped him about his English. With a great interest in

free America, and an intense longing to hear about our war, the barrier of an unknown tongue did not long stand between us. Beginning with my bad French and his broken English, we got on capitally; but he outdid me entirely, making astonishing progress, though he often slapped his forehead with the despairing exclamation, —

"I am imbecile! I never can will shall to have learn this beast of English!"

But he did, and in a month had added a new language to the five he already possessed.

His music was the delight of the house; and he often gave us little concerts with the help of Madam Teiblin, a German St. Cecelia, with a cropped head and a gentlemanly sack, cravat, and collar. Both were enthusiasts, and the longer they played the more inspired they got. The piano vibrated, the stools creaked, the candles danced in their sockets, and every one sat mute while the four white hands chased one another up and down the keys, and the two fine faces beamed with such ecstacy that we almost expected to see instrument and performers disappear in a musical whirlwind.

Lake Leman will never seem so lovely again as when Laddie and I roamed about its shores, floated on its bosom, or laid splendid plans for the future in the sunny garden of the old chateau. I tried it again last year, but the charm was gone, for I missed my boy with his fun, his music, and the frank, fresh affection he gave his "little mamma," as he insisted on calling the lofty spinster who loved him like half a dozen grandmothers rolled into one.

December roses blossomed in the gardens then, and Laddie never failed to have a posy ready for me at dinner. Few evenings passed without "confidences" in my corner of the salon, and I still have a pile of merry little notes which I used to find tucked under my door. He called them chapters of a great history we were to write together, and being a "*polisson*" he illustrated it with droll pictures, and a funny mixture of French and English romance.

It was very pleasant, but like all pleasant things in this world of change it soon came to an end. When I left for Italy we jokingly agreed to meet in

Paris the next May, but neither really felt that we should ever meet again, for Laddie hardly expected to outlive the winter, and I felt sure I should soon be forgotten. As he kissed my hand there were tears in my boy's eyes, and a choke in the voice that tried to say cheerfully, —

"*Bon voyage*, dear and good little mamma. I do not say adieu, but *au revoir*."

Then the carriage rolled away, the wistful face vanished, and nothing remained to me but the memory of Laddie, and a little stain on my glove where a drop had fallen.

As I drew near Paris six months later, and found myself wishing that I might meet Varjo in the great, gay city, and wondering if there was any chance of my doing it, I never dreamed of seeing him so soon; but, as I made my way among the crowd of passengers that poured through the station, feeling tired, bewildered, and homesick, I suddenly saw a blue and white cap wave wildly in the air, then Laddie's beaming face appeared, and Laddie's eager hands grasped mine so cordially that I began to laugh at

once, and felt that Paris was almost as good as home.

"Ah, ha! behold the little mamma, who did not thought to see again her bad son! Yes, I am greatly glad that I make the fine surprise for you as you come all weary to this place of noise. Give to me the billets, for I am still mademoiselle's servant and go to find the coffers."

He got my trunks, put me into a carriage, and as we rolled merrily away I asked how he chanced to meet me so unexpectedly. Knowing where I intended to stay, he had called occasionally till I notified Madame D. of the day and hour of my arrival, and then he had come to "make the fine surprise." He enjoyed the joke like a true boy, and I was glad to see how well he looked, and how gay he seemed.

"You are better?" I said.

"I truly hope so. The winter was good to me and I cough less. It is a small hope, but I do not enlarge my fear by a sad face. I yet work and save a little purse, so that I may not be a heaviness to

those who have the charity to finish me if I fall back and yet die."

I would not hear of that, and told him he looked as well and happy as if he had found a fortune.

He laughed, and answered with his fine bow, "I have. Behold, you come to make the fête for me. I find also here my friends Joseph and Napoleon. Poor as mouses of the church, as you say, but brave boys, and we work together with much gayety."

When I asked if he had leisure to be my guide about Paris, for my time was short and I wanted to see *every thing*, he pranced, and told me he had promised himself a holiday, and had planned many excursions the most wonderful, charming, and gay. Then, having settled me at Madame's, he went blithely away to what I afterward discovered were very poor lodgings, across the river.

Next day began the pleasantest fortnight in all my year of travel. Laddie appeared early, elegant to behold in a new hat and buff gloves, and was immensely amused because the servant informed me that my big son had arrived.

I believe the first thing a woman does in Paris is to buy a new bonnet. I did, or rather stood by and let "my son" do it in the best of French, only whispering when he proposed gorgeous *chapeaus* full of flowers and feathers, that I could not afford it.

"Ah! we must make our economies, must we? See, then, this modest, pearl-colored one, with the crape rose. Yes, we will have that, and be most elegant for the Sunday promenade."

I fear I should have bought a pea-green hat with a yellow plume if he had urged it, so wheedlesome and droll were his ways and words. His good taste saved me, however, and the modest one was sent home for the morrow, when we were to meet Joseph and Napoleon and go to the concert in the Tuileries garden.

Then we set off on our day of sight-seeing, and Laddie proved himself an excellent guide. We had a charming trip about the enchanted city, a gay lunch at a café, and a first brief glimpse of the Louvre. At dinner-time I found a posy at my place; and afterward Laddie came and spent the evening

in my little salon, playing to me, and having what he called "babblings and pleasantries." I found that he was translating "Vanity Fair" into Polish, and intended to sell it at home. He convulsed me with his struggles to put cockney English and slang into good Polish, for he had saved up a list of words for me to explain to him. Haystack and bean-pot were among them, I remember; and when he had mastered the meanings he fell upon the sofa exhausted.

Other days like this followed, and we led a happy life together; for my twelve years' seniority made our adventures quite proper, and I fearlessly went anywhere on the arm of my big son. Not to theatres or balls, however, for heated rooms were bad for Laddie, but pleasant trips out of the city in the bright spring weather, quiet strolls in the gardens, moonlight concerts in the Champs Elysées; or, best of all, long talks with music in the little red salon, with the gas turned low, and the ever-changing scenes of the Rue de Rivoli under the balcony.

Never were pleasures more cheaply purchased or

more thoroughly enjoyed, for our hearts were as light as our purses, and our "little economies" gave zest to our amusements.

Joseph and Napoleon sometimes joined us, and I felt in my element with the three invalid soldier boys, for Napoleon still limped with a wound received in the war, Joseph had never recovered from his two years' imprisonment in an Austrian dungeon, and Laddie's loyalty might yet cost him his life.

Thanks to them, I discovered a joke played upon me by my "*polisson*." He told me to call him "ma drogha," saying it meant "my friend," in Polish. I innocently did so, and he seemed to find great pleasure in it, for his eyes always laughed when I said it. Using it one day before the other lads, I saw a queer twinkle in their eyes, and, suspecting mischief, demanded the real meaning of the words. Laddie tried to silence them, but the joke was too good to keep, and I found to my dismay that I had been calling him "my darling" in the tenderest manner.

How the three rascals shouted, and what a vain

struggle it was to try and preserve my dignity when Laddie clasped his hands and begged pardon, explaining that jokes were necessary to his health, and he never meant me to know the full baseness of this "pleasantrie!" I revenged myself by giving him some bad English for his translation, and telling him of it just as I left Paris.

It was not all fun with my boy, however; he had his troubles, and in spite of his cheerfulness he knew what heartache was. Walking in the quaint garden of the Luxembourg one day, he confided to me the little romance of his life. A very touching little romance as he told it, with eloquent eyes and voice and frequent pauses for breath. I cannot give his words, but the simple facts were these:—

He had grown up with a pretty cousin, and at eighteen was desperately in love with her. She returned his affection, but they could not be happy, for her father wished her to marry a richer man. In Poland, to marry without the consent of parents is to incur lasting disgrace; so Leonore obeyed, and the young pair parted. This had been a heavy sor-

row to Laddie, and he rushed into the war hoping to end his trouble.

"Do you ever hear from your cousin?" I asked, as he walked beside me, looking sadly down the green aisles where kings and queens had loved and parted years ago.

"I only know that she suffers still, for she remembers. Her husband submits to the Russians, and I despise him as I have no English to tell;" and he clenched his hands with the flash of the eye and sudden kindling of the whole face that made him handsome.

He showed me a faded little picture, and when I tried to comfort him, he laid his head down on the pedestal of one of the marble queens who guard the walk, as if he never cared to lift it up again.

But he was all right in a minute, and bravely put away his sorrow with the little picture. He never spoke of it again, and I saw no more shadows on his face till we came to say good-by.

"You have been so kind to me, I wish I had something beautiful to give you, Laddie," I said, feeling that it would be hard to get on without my boy.

"This time it is for always; so, as a parting souvenir, give to me the sweet English good-by."

As he said this, with a despairing sort of look, as if he could not spare even so humble a friend as myself, my heart was quite rent within me, and, regardless of several prim English ladies, I drew down his tall head and kissed him tenderly, feeling that in this world there were no more meetings for us. Then I ran away and buried myself in an empty railway carriage, hugging the little cologne bottle he had given me.

He promised to write, and for five years he has kept his word, sending me from Paris and Poland cheery, bright letters in English, at my desire, so that he might not forget. Here is one as a specimen.

"My Dear and Good Friend, — What do you think of me that I do not write so long time? Excuse me, my good mamma, for I was so busy in these days I could not do this pleasant thing. I write English without the fear that you laugh at it, be-

cause I know it is more agreeable to read the own language, and I think you are not excepted of this rule. It is good of me, for the expressions of love and regard, made with faults, take the funny appearance; they are *ridicule*, and instead to go to the heart, they make the laugh. Never mind, I do it.

"You cannot imagine yourself how *stupide* is Paris when you are gone. I fly to my work, and make no more fêtes, — it is too sad alone. I tie myself to my table and my Vanity (not of mine, for I am not vain, am I?). I wish some chapters to finish themselfs *vite*, that I send them to Pologne and know the end. I have a little question to ask you (of Vanity as always). I cannot translate this, no one of *dictionnaires* makes me the words, and I think it is *jàrgon de prison*, this little period. Behold: —

> 'Mopy, is that your snum?'
> 'Nubble your dad and gully the dog,' &c.

"So funny things I cannot explain myself, so I send to you, and you reply sooner than without it,

for you have so kind interest in my work you do not stay to wait. So this is a little hook for you to make you write some words to your son who likes it so much and is fond of you.

"My doctor tells me my lungs are soon to be re-established; so you may imagine yourself how glad I am, and of more courage in my future. You may one day see your Varjo in Amerique, if I study commerce as I wish. So then the last time of seeing ourselves is *not* the last. Is that to please you? I suppose the grand *histoire* is finished, *n' est ce pas?* You will then send it to me care of M. Gryhomski Austriche, and he will give to me in clandestine way at Varsovie, otherwise it will be confiscated at the frontier by the stupide Russians.

"Now we are dispersed in two sides of world far apart, for soon I go home to Pologne and am no more '*juif errant.*' It is now time I work at my life in some useful way, and I do it.

"As I am your *grand fils*, it is proper that I make you my compliment of happy Christmas and New Year, is it not? I wish for you so many as they

may fulfil long human life. May this year bring you more and more good hearts to love you (the only real happiness in the hard life), and may I be as now, yours for always,

"VARJO."

A year ago he sent me his photograph and a few lines. I acknowledged the receipt of it, but since then not a word has come, and I begin to fear that my boy is dead. Others have appeared to take his place, but they don't suit, and I keep his corner always ready for him if he lives. If he is dead, I am glad to have known so sweet and brave a character, for it does one good to see even as short-lived and obscure a hero as my Polish boy, whose dead December rose embalms for me the memory of Varjo, the last and dearest of my boys.

It is hardly necessary to add, for the satisfaction of inquisitive little women, that Laddie was the original of Laurie, as far as a pale pen and ink sketch could embody a living, loving boy.

TESSA'S SURPRISES.

I.

LITTLE TESSA sat alone by the fire, waiting for her father to come home from work. The children were fast asleep, all four in the big bed behind the curtain; the wind blew hard outside, and the snow beat on the window-panes; the room was large, and the fire so small and feeble that it didn't half warm the little bare toes peeping out of the old shoes on the hearth.

Tessa's father was an Italian plaster-worker, very poor, but kind and honest. The mother had died not long ago, and left twelve-year old Tessa to take care of the little children. She tried to be very wise and motherly, and worked for them like any little woman; but it was so hard to keep the small bodies warm and fed, and the small souls good and happy, that poor Tessa was often at her wits' end. She

always waited for her father, no matter how tired she was, so that he might find his supper warm, a bit of fire, and a loving little face to welcome him. Tessa thought over her troubles at these quiet times, and made her plans; for her father left things to her a good deal, and she had no friends but Tommo, the harp-boy upstairs, and the lively cricket who lived in the chimney. To-night her face was very sober, and her pretty brown eyes very thoughtful as she stared at the fire and knit her brows, as if perplexed. She was not thinking of her old shoes, nor the empty closet, nor the boys' ragged clothes just then. No; she had a fine plan in her good little head, and was trying to discover how she could carry it out.

You see, Christmas was coming in a week; and she had set her heart on putting something in the children's stockings, as the mother used to do, for while she lived things were comfortable. Now Tessa had not a penny in the world, and didn't know how to get one, for all the father's earnings had to go for food, fire, and rent.

"If there were only fairies, ah! how heavenly that

would be; for then, I should tell them all I wish, and, pop! behold the fine things in my lap!" said Tessa to herself. "I must earn the money; there is no one to give it to me, and I cannot beg. But what can I do, so small and stupid and shy as I am? I *must* find some way to give the little ones a nice Christmas. I *must!* I *must!*" and Tessa pulled her long hair, as if that would help her think.

But it didn't, and her heart got heavier and heavier; for it did seem hard that in a great city full of fine things, there should be none for poor Nono, Sep, and little Speranza. Just as Tessa's tears began to tumble off her eyelashes on to her brown cheeks, the cricket began to chirp. Of course, he didn't say a word; but it really did seem as if he had answered her question almost as well as a fairy; for, before he had piped a dozen shrill notes, an idea popped into Tessa's head, — such a truly splendid idea that she clapped her hands and burst out laughing. "I'll do it! I'll do it! if father will let me," she said to herself, smiling and nodding at the fire. "Tommo will like to have me go with him

and sing, while he plays his harp in the streets. I know many songs, and may get money if I am not frightened; for people throw pennies to other little girls who only play the tambourine. Yes, I will try; and then, if I do well, the little ones shall have a Merry Christmas."

So full of her plan was Tessa, that she ran upstairs at once, and asked Tommo if he would take her with him on the morrow. Her friend was delighted, for he thought Tessa's songs very sweet, and was sure she would get money if she tried.

"But see, then, it is cold in the streets; the wind bites, and the snow freezes one's fingers. The day is very long, people are cross, and at night one is ready to die with weariness. Thou art so small, Tessa, I am afraid it will go badly with thee," said Tommo, who was a merry, black-eyed boy of fourteen, with the kindest heart in the world under his old jacket.

"I do not mind cold and wet and cross people, if I can get the pennies," answered Tessa, feeling very brave with such a friend to help her. She thanked

Tommo, and ran away to get ready, for she felt sure her father would not refuse her any thing. She sewed up the holes in her shoes as well as she could, for she had much of that sort of cobbling to do; she mended her only gown, and laid ready the old hood and shawl which had been her mother's. Then she washed out little Ranza's frock and put it to dry, because she would not be able to do it the next day. She set the table and got things ready for breakfast, for Tommo went out early, and must not be kept waiting for her. She longed to make the beds and dress the children over night, she was in such a hurry to have all in order; but, as that could not be, she sat down again, and tried over all the songs she knew. Six pretty ones were chosen; and she sung away with all her heart in a fresh little voice so sweetly that the children smiled in their sleep, and her father's tired face brightened as he entered, for Tessa was his cheery cricket on the hearth. When she had told her plan, Peter Benari shook his head, and thought it would never do; but Tessa begged so hard, he consented at last that she should try it for

one week, and sent her to bed the happiest little girl in New York.

Next morning the sun shone, but the cold wind blew, and the snow lay thick in the streets. As soon as her father was gone, Tessa flew about and put every thing in nice order, telling the children she was going out for the day, and they were to mind Tommo's mother, who would see about the fire and the dinner; for the good woman loved Tessa, and entered into her little plans with all her heart. Nono and Guiseppe, or Sep, as they called him, wondered what she was going away for, and little Ranza cried at being left; but Tessa told them they would know all about it in a week, and have a fine time if they were good; so they kissed her all round and let her go.

Poor Tessa's heart beat fast as she trudged away with Tommo, who slung his harp over his shoulder, and gave her his hand. It was rather a dirty hand, but so kind that Tessa clung to it, and kept looking up at the friendly brown face for encouragement.

"We go first to the *café*, where many French and

Italians eat the breakfast. They like my music, and often give me sips of hot coffee, which I like much. You too shall have the sips, and perhaps the pennies, for these people are greatly kind," said Tommo, leading her into a large smoky place, where many people sat at little tables, eating and drinking. "See, now, have no fear; give them 'Bella Monica;' that is merry and will make the laugh," whispered Tommo, tuning his harp.

For a moment Tessa felt so frightened that she wanted to run away; but she remembered the empty stockings at home, and the fine plan, and she resolved *not* to give it up. One fat old Frenchman nodded to her, and it seemed to help her very much; for she began to sing before she thought, and that was the hardest part of it. Her voice trembled, and her cheeks grew redder and redder as she went on; but she kept her eyes fixed on her old shoes, and so got through without breaking down, which was very nice. The people laughed, for the song *was* merry; and the fat man smiled and nodded again. This gave her courage to try another, and she sung better

and better each time; for Tommo played his best, and kept whispering to her, "Yes; we go well; this is fine. They will give the money and the blessed coffee."

So they did; for, when the little concert was over, several men put pennies in the cap Tessa offered, and the fat man took her on his knee, and ordered a mug of coffee, and some bread and butter for them both. This quite won her heart; and when they left the *café*, she kissed her hand to the old Frenchman, and said to her friend, "How kind they are! I like this very much; and now it is not hard."

But Tommo shook his curly head, and answered, soberly, "Yes, I took you there first, for they love music, and are of our country; but up among the great houses we shall not always do well. The people there are busy or hard or idle, and care nothing for harps and songs. Do not skip and laugh too soon; for the day is long, and we have but twelve pennies yet."

Tessa walked more quietly, and rubbed her cold hands, feeling that the world was a very big place,

and wondering how the children got on at home without the little mother. Till noon they did not earn much, for every one seemed in a hurry, and the noise of many sleigh-bells drowned the music. Slowly they made their way up to the great squares where the big houses were, with fine ladies and pretty children at the windows. Here Tessa sung all her best songs, and Tommo played as fast as his fingers could fly; but it was too cold to have the windows open, so the pretty children could not listen long, and the ladies tossed out a little money, and soon went back to their own affairs.

All the afternoon the two friends wandered about, singing and playing, and gathering up their small harvest. At dusk they went home, — Tessa so hoarse she could hardly speak, and so tired she fell asleep over her supper. But she had made half a dollar, for Tommo divided the money fairly, and she felt rich with her share. The other days were very much like this; sometimes they made more, sometimes less, but Tommo always "went halves;" and Tessa kept on, in spite of cold and weariness, for her plans

grew as her earnings increased, and now she hoped to get useful things, instead of candy and toys alone.

On the day before Christmas she made herself as tidy as she could, for she hoped to earn a good deal. She tied a bright scarlet handkerchief over the old hood, and the brilliant color set off her brown cheeks and bright eyes, as well as the pretty black braids of her hair. Tommo's mother lent her a pair of boots so big that they turned up at the toes, but there were no holes in them, and Tessa felt quite elegant in whole boots. Her hands were covered with chilblains, for she had no mittens; but she put them under her shawl, and scuffled merrily away in her big boots, feeling so glad that the week was over, and nearly three dollars safe in her pocket. How gay the streets were that day! how brisk every one was, and how bright the faces looked, as people trotted about with big baskets, holly-wreaths, and young evergreens going to blossom into splendid Christmas trees!

"If I could have a tree for the children, I'd never

want any thing again. But I can't; so I'll fill the socks all full, and be happy," said Tessa, as she looked wistfully into the gay stores, and saw the heavy baskets go by.

"Who knows what may happen if we do well?" returned Tommo, nodding wisely, for he had a plan as well as Tessa, and kept chuckling over it as he trudged through the mud. They did *not* do well, somehow, for every one seemed so full of their own affairs they could not stop to listen, even to "Bella Monica," but bustled away to spend their money in turkeys, toys, and trees. In the afternoon it began to rain, and poor Tessa's heart to fail her; for the big boots tired her feet, the cold wind made her hands ache, and the rain spoilt the fine red handkerchief. Even Tommo looked sober, and didn't whistle as he walked, for he also was disappointed, and his plan looked rather doubtful, the pennies came in so slowly.

"We'll try one more street, and then go home, thou art so tired, little one. Come; let me wipe thy face, and give me thy hand here in my jacket pocket;

there it will be as warm as any kitten;" and kind Tommo brushed away the drops which were not *all* rain from Tessa's cheeks, tucked the poor hand into his ragged pocket, and led her carefully along the slippery streets, for the boots nearly tripped her up.

II.

At the first house, a cross old gentleman flapped his newspaper at them; at the second, a young gentleman and lady were so busy talking, that they never turned their heads; and at the third, a servant came out and told them to go away, because some one was sick. At the fourth, some people let them sing all their songs, and gave nothing. The next three houses were empty; and the last of all showed not a single face, as they looked up anxiously. It was so cold, so dark and discouraging, that Tessa couldn't help one sob; and, as he glanced down at the little red nose and wet figure beside him, Tommo gave his harp an angry thump, and said something very fierce in Italian. They were just going to turn away; but

they didn't, for that angry thump happened to be the best thing they could have done. All of a sudden a little head appeared at the window, as if the sound had brought it; then another and another, till there were five, of all heights and colors, and five eager faces peeped out, smiling and nodding to the two below.

"Sing, Tessa; sing! Quick! quick!" cried Tommo, twanging away with all his might, and showing his white teeth, as he smiled back at the little gentle-folk.

Bless us! How Tessa did tune up at that! She chirped away like a real bird, forgetting all about the tears on her cheeks, the ache in her hands, and the heaviness at her heart. The children laughed, and clapped their hands, and cried "More! more! Sing another, little girl! Please, do!" And away they went again, piping and playing, till Tessa's breath was gone, and Tommo's stout fingers tingled well.

"Mamma says, come to the door; it's too muddy to throw the money in the street!" cried out a kindly child's voice, as Tessa held up the old cap, with beseeching eyes.

Up the wide stone steps went the street musicians, and the whole flock came running down to give a handful of silver, and ask all sorts of questions. Tessa felt so grateful, that, without waiting for Tommo, she sang her sweetest little song all alone. It was about a lost lamb, and her heart was in the song; therefore, she sang it well, so well, that a pretty young lady came down to listen, and stood watching the bright-eyed child, who looked about her as she sang, evidently enjoying the light and warmth of the fine hall, and the sight of the lovely children with their gay dresses, shining hair, and dainty little shoes.

"You have a charming voice, child. Who taught you to sing?" asked the young lady, kindly.

"My mother. She is dead now; but I do not forget," answered Tessa, in her pretty broken English.

"I wish she could sing at our tree, since Bella is ill," cried one of the children, peeping through the banisters.

"She is not fair enough for the angel, and too

large to go up in the tree. But she sings sweetly, and looks as if she would like to see a tree," said the young lady.

"Oh, so much!" exclaimed Tessa; adding eagerly, "my sister Ranza is small and pretty as a baby-angel. She could sit up in the fine tree, and I could sing for her from under the table."

"Sit down and warm yourself, and tell me about Ranza," said the kind elder sister, who liked the confiding little girl, in spite of her shabby clothes.

So Tessa sat down and dried the big boots over the furnace, and told her story, while Tommo stood modestly in the background, and the children listened with faces full of interest.

"O Rose! Let us see the little girl; and if she will do, let us have her, and Tessa can learn our song, and it will be splendid!" cried the biggest boy, who sat astride of a chair, and stared at the harp with round eyes.

"I'll ask mamma," said Rose; and away she went into the dining-room close by. As the door opened, Tessa saw what looked to her like a fairy feast,—

all silver mugs and flowery plates and oranges and nuts and rosy wine in tall glass pitchers, and smoking dishes that smelt so deliciously she could not restrain a little sniff of satisfaction.

"Are you hungry?" asked the boy, in a grand tone.

"Yes, sir," meekly answered Tessa.

"I say, mamma; she wants something to eat. Can I give her an orange?" called the boy, prancing away into the splendid room, quite like a fairy prince, Tessa thought.

A plump, motherly lady came out and looked at Tessa, asked a few questions, and then told her to come to-morrow with Ranza, and they would see what could be done. Tessa clapped her hands for joy, — she didn't mind the chilblains now, — and Tommo played a lively march, he was so pleased.

"Will you come, too, and bring your harp? You shall be paid, and shall have something from the tree, likewise," said the motherly lady, who liked what Tessa gratefully told about his kindness to her.

"Ah, yes; I shall come with much gladness, and

play as never in my life before," cried Tommo, with a flourish of the old cap that made the children laugh.

"Give these to your brothers," said the fairy prince, stuffing nuts and oranges into Tessa's hands.

"And these to the little girl," added one of the young princesses, flying out of the dining-room with cakes and rosy apples for Ranza.

Tessa didn't know what to say; but her eyes were full, and she just took the mother's white hand in both her little grimy ones, and kissed it many times in her pretty Italian fashion. The lady understood her, and stroked her cheek softly, saying to her elder daughter, "We must take care of this good little creature. Freddy, bring me your mittens; these poor hands must be covered. Alice, get your play-hood; this handkerchief is all wet; and, Maud, bring the old chinchilla tippet."

The children ran, and in a minute there were lovely blue mittens on the red hands, a warm hood over the black braids, and a soft "pussy" round the sore throat.

"Ah! so kind, so very kind! I have no way to say 'thank you;' but Ranza shall be for you a heavenly angel, and I will sing my heart out for your tree!" cried Tessa, folding the mittens as if she would say a prayer of thankfulness if she knew how.

Then they went away, and the pretty children called after them, "Come again, Tessa! come again, Tommo!" Now the rain didn't seem dismal, the wind cold, nor the way long, as they bought their gifts and hurried home, for kind words and the sweet magic of charity had changed all the world to them.

I think the good spirits who fly about on Christmas Eve, to help the loving fillers of little stockings, smiled very kindly on Tessa as she brooded joyfully over the small store of presents that seemed so magnificent to her. All the goodies were divided evenly into three parts and stowed away in father's three big socks, which hung against the curtain. With her three dollars, she had got a pair of shoes for Nono, a knit cap for Sep, and a pair of white stock-

ings for Ranza; to her she also gave the new hood; to Nono the mittens; and to Sep the tippet.

"Now the dear boys can go out, and my Ranza will be ready for the lady to see, in her nice new things," said Tessa, quite sighing with pleasure to see how well the gifts looked pinned up beside the bulging socks, which wouldn't hold them all. The little mother kept nothing for herself but the pleasure of giving every thing away; yet, I think, she was both richer and happier than if she had kept them all. Her father laughed as he had not done since the mother died, when he saw how comically the old curtain had broken out into boots and hoods, stockings and tippets.

"I wish I had a gold gown and a silver hat for thee, my Tessa, thou art so good. May the saints bless and keep thee always!" said Peter Benari tenderly, as he held his little daughter close, and gave her the good-night kiss.

Tessa felt very rich as she crept under the faded counterpane, feeling as if she had received a lovely gift, and fell happily asleep with chubby Ranza in

her arms, and the two rough black heads peeping out at the foot of the bed. She dreamed wonderful dreams that night, and woke in the morning to find real wonders before her eyes. She got up early, to see if the socks were all right, and there she found the most astonishing sight. Four socks, instead of three; and by the fourth, pinned out quite elegantly, was a little dress, evidently meant for her, — a warm, woollen dress, all made, and actually with bright buttons on it. It nearly took her breath away; so did the new boots on the floor, and the funny long stocking like a gray sausage, with a wooden doll staring out at the top, as if she said, politely, "A Merry Christmas, ma'am!" Tessa screamed and danced in her delight, and up tumbled all the children to scream and dance with her, making a regular carnival on a small scale. Everybody hugged and kissed everybody else, offered sucks of orange, bites of cake, and exchanges of candy; every one tried on the new things, and pranced about in them like a flock of peacocks. Ranza skipped to and fro airily, dressed in her white socks and the red hood; the

boys promenaded in their little shirts, one with his creaking new shoes and mittens, the other in his gay cap and fine tippet; and Tessa put her dress straight on, feeling that her father's "gold gown" was not all a joke. In her long stocking she found all sorts of treasures; for Tommo had stuffed it full of queer things, and his mother had made gingerbread into every imaginable shape, from fat pigs to full omnibuses.

Dear me! What happy little souls they were that morning; and when they were quiet again, how like a fairy tale did Tessa's story sound to them. Ranza was quite ready to be an angel; and the boys promised to be marvellously good, if they were only allowed to see the tree at the "palace," as they called the great house.

Little Ranza was accepted with delight by the kind lady and her children, and Tessa learned the song quite easily. The boys *were* asked; and, after a happy day, the young Italians all returned, to play their parts at the fine Christmas party. Mamma and Miss Rose drilled them all; and, when the fold-

ing-doors flew open, one rapturous "Oh!" arose from the crowd of children gathered to the festival. I assure you, it was splendid; the great tree glittering with lights and gifts; and, on her invisible perch, up among the green boughs, sat the little golden-haired angel, all in white, with downy wings, a shining crown on her head, and the most serene satisfaction in her blue eyes, as she stretched her chubby arms to those below, and smiled her baby smile at them. Before any one could speak, a voice, as fresh and sweet as a lark's, sang the Christmas Carol so blithely, that every one stood still to hear, and then clapped till the little angel shook on her perch, and cried out, "Be 'till, or me'll fall!" How they laughed at that; and what fun they had talking to Ranza, while Miss Rose stripped the tree, for the angel could not resist temptation, and amused herself by eating all the bonbons she could reach, till she was taken down, to dance about like a fairy in a white frock and red shoes. Tessa and her friends had many presents; the boys were perfect lambs, Tommo played for the little folks to dance, and

every one said something friendly to the strangers, so that they did not feel shy, in spite of shabby clothes. It was a happy night; and all their lives they remembered it as something too beautiful and bright to be quite true. Before they went home, the kind mamma told Tessa she should be her friend, and gave her a motherly kiss, which warmed the child's heart and seemed to set a seal upon that promise. It was faithfully kept, for the rich lady had been touched by Tessa's patient struggles and sacrifices; and for many years, thanks to her benevolence, there was no end to Tessa's Surprises.

BUZZ.

I LIVE high up in a city house all alone. My room is a cosy little place, though there is nothing very splendid in it, — only my pictures and books, my flowers and my little friend. When I began to live there, I was very busy and therefore very happy; but by and by, when my hurry was over and I had more time to myself, I often felt lonely. When I ate my meals I used to wish for a pleasant companion to eat with me; and when I sat by the fire evenings, I thought how much more social it would be if some one sat opposite. I had many friends and callers through the day, but the evenings were often rather dull; for I couldn't read much, and didn't care to go out in the stormy weather.

I was wishing for a cheerful friend one night, when all of a sudden I found one; for, sitting on

my hand, I saw a plump, jolly-looking fly. He sat quietly staring at me, with a mild little hum, as if to say, —

"How are you? You wanted a friend, and here I am. Will you have me?"

Of course I would, for I liked him directly, he was so cheery and confiding, and seemed as glad to see me as I was to see him. All his mates were dead and gone, and he was alone, like myself. So I waggled one finger, by way of welcome, fearing to shake my hand, lest he should tumble off and feel hurt at my reception. He seemed to understand me, and buzzed again, evidently saying, —

"Thank you, ma'am. I should like to stay in your warm room, and amuse you for my board. I won't disturb you, but do my best to be a good little friend."

So the bargain was struck, and he stopped to tea. I found that his manners had been neglected; for he was inclined to walk over the butter, drink out of the cream-pot, and put his fingers in the jelly. A few taps with my spoon taught him to behave with

more propriety, and he sipped a drop of milk from the waiter with a crumb of sugar, as a well-bred fly should do.

On account of his fine voice, I named him Buzz, and we soon got on excellently together. He seemed to like his new quarters, and, after exploring every corner of the room, he chose his favorite haunts and began to enjoy himself. I always knew where he was, for he kept up a constant song, humming and buzzing, like a little kettle getting ready to boil.

On sunny days, he amused himself by bumping his head against the window, and watching what went on outside. It would have given me a headache, but he seemed to enjoy it immensely. Up in my hanging basket of ivy he made his bower, and sat there on the moss basking in the sunshine, as luxuriously as any gentleman in his conservatory. He was interested in the plants, and examined them daily with great care, walking over the ivy leaves, grubbing under the moss, and poking his head into the unfolding hyacinth buds to see how they got on.

The pictures, also, seemed to attract his attention, for he spent much time skating over the glasses and studying the designs. Sometimes I would find him staring at my Madonna, as if he said, "What in the world are all those topsy-turvy children about?" Then he'd sit in the middle of a brook, in a water-color sketch by Vautin, as if bathing his feet, or seem to be eating the cherry which one little duck politely offers another little duck, in Oscar Pletch's Summer Party. He frequently kissed my mother's portrait, and sat on my father's bald head, as if trying to get out some of the wisdom stored up there, like honey in an ill-thatched bee-hive. My bronze Mercury rather puzzled him, for he could not understand why the young gentleman didn't fly off when he had four wings and seemed in such a hurry.

I'm afraid he was a trifle vain, for he sat before the glass a great deal, and I often saw him cleaning his proboscis, and twiddling his feelers, and I know he was "prinking," as we say. The books pleased him, too, and he used to run them over, as if trying to choose which he would read, and never seemed

able to decide. He would have nothing to say to the fat French Dictionary, or my English Plays, but liked Goethe and Schiller, Emerson and Browning, as well as I did. Carlyle didn't suit him, and Richter evidently made his head ache. But Jean Ingelow's Poems delighted him, and so did her "Stories Told to a Child." "Fairy Bells" he often listened to, and was very fond of the pictures in a photograph book of foreign places and great people.

He frequently promenaded on the piazza of a little Swiss chalet, standing on the mantel-piece, and thought it a charming residence for a single gentleman like himself. The closet delighted him extremely, and he buzzed in the most joyful manner when he got among the provisions, — for we kept house together. Such revels as he had in the sugar-bowl; such feasts of gingerbread and grapes; such long sips of milk, and sly peeps into every uncovered box and dish! Once I'm afraid he took too much cider, for I found him lying on his back, kicking and humming like a crazy top, and he was very queer all the rest of that day; so I kept the bottle corked

after that. But his favorite nook was among the ferns in the vase which a Parian dancing-girl carried. She stood just over the stove on one little toe, rattling some castanets, which made no sound, and never getting a step farther for all her prancing. This was a warm and pretty retreat for Buzz, and there he spent much of his time, swinging on the ferns, sleeping snugly in the vase, or warming his feet in the hot air that blew up, like a south wind, from the stove.

I don't believe there was a happier fly in Boston than my friend Buzz, and I grew fonder and fonder of him every day; for he never got into mischief, but sung his cheery song, no matter what the weather was, and made himself agreeable. Then he was so interested in all I did, it was delightful to have him round. When I wrote he came and walked about over my paper to see that it was right, peeped into my ink-stand, and ran after my pen. He never made silly or sharp criticisms on my stories, but appeared to admire them very much; so I am sure he was a good judge. When I sewed,

he sat in my basket, or played hide-and-seek in the folds of my work, talking away all the while in the most sociable manner. He often flew up all of a sudden, and danced about in the air, as if he was in such a jolly mood he couldn't keep still, and wanted me to come and play with him. But, alas! I had no wings, and could only sit stupidly still, and laugh at his pranks. That was his exercise, for he never went out, and only took a sniff of air now and then when I opened the windows.

Well, little Buzz and I lived together many weeks, and never got tired of one another, which is saying a good deal. At Christmas I went home for a week and left my room to take care of itself. I put the hyacinths into the closet to be warm, and dropped the curtain, so the frost should not nip my ivy; but I forgot Buzz. I really would have taken him with me, or carried him down to a neighbor's room to be taken care of while I was away, but I never thought of him in the hurry of getting my presents and myself ready. Off I went without even saying "good-by," and never thought of my little friend till

Freddy, my small nephew, said to me one evening at dusk, —

"Aunt Jo, tell me a story."

So I began to tell him about Buzz, and all of a sudden I cried out, —

"Mercy on me! I'm afraid he'll die of cold while I'm gone."

It troubled me a good deal, and I wanted to know how the poor little fellow was so much that I would have gone to see if I had not been so far away. But it would be rather silly to hurry away twenty miles to look after one fly: so I finished my visit, and then went back to my room, hoping to find Buzz alive and well in spite of the cold.

Alas, no! my little friend was gone. There he lay on his back on the mantel-piece, his legs meekly folded, and his wings stiff and still. He had evidently gone to the warm place, and been surprised when the heat died out and left him to freeze. My poor little Buzz had sung his last song, danced his last dance, and gone where the good flies go. I was very sorry, and buried him among the ivy roots,

where the moss lay green above him, the sun shone warmly on him, and the bitter cold could never come. I miss him very much; when I sit writing, I miss his cheerful voice and busy wings; at meals there is no tidy little body to drink up spilt drops and eat the crumbs; in the evenings, when I sit alone, I want him more than ever, and every day as I water my plants, I say, softly, —

"Grow green, ivy, lie lightly, moss, shine warmly, sun, and make his last bed pleasant to my little friend."

THE CHILDREN'S JOKE.

"'YOU can't do this' and 'you mustn't do that,' from morning to night. Try it yourself and see how you'd like it," muttered Harry, as he flung down his hat in sulky obedience to his father's command to give up a swim in the river and keep himself cool with a book that warm summer evening.

"Of course I should like to mind my parents. Good children always do," began Mr. Fairbairn, entirely forgetting the pranks of his boyhood, as people are apt to.

"Glad I didn't know you then. Must have been a regular prig," growled Harry under his breath.

"Silence, sir! go to your room, and don't let me see you till tea-time. You must be taught respect as well as obedience," and Mr. Fairbairn gave the table a rap that caused his son to retire precipitately.

On the stairs he met his sister Kitty looking as cross as himself.

"What's the matter with you?" he asked, pausing a minute, for misery loves company.

"Mamma will make me dress up in a stiff clean frock, and have my hair curled over again, just because some one *may* come. I want to play in the garden, and I can't all fussed up this way. I do hate company and clothes and manners, don't you?" answered Kitty, with a spiteful pull at her sash.

"I hate being ordered round everlastingly, and badgered from morning till night. I'd just like to be let alone," and Harry went on his way to captivity with a grim shake of the head and a very strong desire to run away from home altogether.

"So would I, mamma is so fussy. I never have any peace of my life," sighed Kitty, feeling that her lot was a hard one.

The martyr in brown linen went up, and the other martyr in white cambric went down, both looking as they felt, rebellious and unhappy. Yet a stranger seeing them and their home would have thought

they had every thing heart could desire. All the comforts that money could buy, and all the beauty that taste could give seemed gathered round them. Papa and mamma loved the two little people dearly, and no real care or sorrow came to trouble the lives that would have been all sunshine but for one thing. With the best intentions in the world, Mr. and Mrs. Fairbairn were spoiling their children by constant fault-finding, too many rules, and too little sympathy with the active young souls and bodies under their care. As Harry said, they were ordered about, corrected and fussed over from morning till night, and were getting so tired of it that the most desperate ideas began to enter their heads.

Now, in the house was a quiet old maiden aunt, who saw the mischief brewing and tried to cure it by suggesting more liberty and less "nagging," as the boys call it. But Mr. and Mrs. F. always silenced her by saying, —

"My dear Betsey, you never had a family, so how *can* you know any thing about the proper management of children?"

They quite forgot that sister Betsey had brought up a flock of motherless brothers and sisters, and done it wisely and well, though she never got any thanks or praise for it, and never expected any for doing her duty faithfully. If it had not been for aunty, Harry and Kitty would have long ago carried out their favorite plan and have run away together, like Roland and Maybird. She kept them from this foolish prank by all sorts of unsuspected means, and was their refuge in troublous times. For all her quiet ways, aunty was full of fun as well as sympathy and patience, and she smoothed the thorny road to virtue with the innocent and kindly little arts that make some people as useful and beloved as good fairy godmothers were once upon a time.

As they sat at tea that evening papa and mamma were most affable and lively; but the children's spirits were depressed by a long day of restraint, and they sat like well-bred mutes, languidly eating their supper.

"It's the warm weather. They need something bracing. I'll give them a dose of iron mixture tomorrow," said mamma.

"I've taken enough now to make a cooking-stove," groaned Kitty, who hated being dosed.

"If you'd let me go swimming every night I'd be all right," added Harry.

"Not another word on that point. I will *not* let you do it, for you will get drowned as sure as you try," said mamma, who was so timid she had panics the minute her boy was out of sight.

"Aunt Betsey let her boys go, and they never came to grief," began Harry.

"Aunt Betsey's ideas and mine differ. Children are not brought up now as they were in her day," answered mamma with a superior air.

"I just wish they were. Jolly good times *her* boys had."

"Yes, and girls too, playing any thing they liked, and not rigged up and plagued with company," cried Kitty, with sudden interest.

"What do you mean by that?" asked papa, good-naturedly; for somehow his youth returned to him for a minute, and seemed very pleasant.

The children could not explain very well, but Harry said slowly,—

"If you were to be in our places for a day you'd see what we mean."

"Wouldn't it be worth your while to try the experiment?" said Aunt Betsey, with a smile.

Papa and mamma laughed at the idea, but looked sober when aunty added, —

"Why not put yourselves in their places for a day and see how you like it? I think you would understand the case better than any one could describe it, and perhaps do both yourselves and the children a lasting service."

"Upon my word, that's a droll idea! What do you say to it, mamma?" and papa looked much amused.

"I am willing to try it if you are, just for the fun of the thing, but I don't think it will do any good;" and mamma shook her head as if Aunt Betsey's plan was a wild one.

The children sat quite speechless with surprise at this singular proposal, but as its full richness dawned upon them, they skipped in their chairs and clapped their hands delightedly.

"How do you propose to carry out this new educational frolic?" asked papa, beginning to feel some curiosity as to the part he was to play.

"Merely let the children do as they like for one day and have full power over you. Let them plan your duties and pleasures, order your food, fix your hours, and punish or reward you as they think proper. You must promise entire obedience, and keep the agreement till night."

"Good! good! Oh, won't it be fun!" cried Harry and Kitty, applauding enthusiastically; while papa and mamma looked rather sober as the plan was developed before them.

"To-morrow is a holiday for us all, and we might celebrate it by this funny experiment. It will amuse us and do no harm, at any rate," added aunty, quite in love with her new scheme.

"Very well, we will. Come, mamma, let us promise, and see what these rogues will do for us. Playing father and mother is no joke, mind you; but you will have an easier time of it than we do, for *we* shall behave ourselves," said papa, with a virtuous expression.

Mamma agreed, and the supper ended merrily, for every one was full of curiosity as to the success of the new play. Harry and Kitty went to bed early, that they might be ready for the exciting labors of the next day. Aunt Betsey paid each a short visit before they slept, and it is supposed that she laid out the order of performances, and told each what to do; for the little people would never have thought of so many sly things if left to themselves.

At seven, the next morning, as mamma was in her dressing-room, just putting on her cool, easy wrapper, in came Kitty with a solemn face, though her eyes danced with fun, as she said, —

"Careless, untidy girl! Put on a clean dress, do up your hair properly, and go and practise half an hour before breakfast."

At first mamma looked as if inclined to refuse, but Kitty was firm; and, with a sigh, mamma rustled into a stiff, scratchy, French print, took her hair out of the comfortable net, and braided it carefully up; then, instead of reading in her arm-chair, she was led to the parlor and set to learning a hard piece of music.

"Can't I have my early cup of tea and my roll?" she asked.

"Eating between meals is a very bad habit, and I can't allow it," said Kitty, in the tone her mother often used to her. "I shall have a mug of new milk and a roll, because grown people need more nourishment than children;" and sitting down, she ate her early lunch with a relish, while poor mamma played away, feeling quite out of tune herself.

Harry found papa enjoying the last delightful dose that makes bed so fascinating of a morning. As if half afraid to try the experiment, the boy slowly approached and gave the sleeper a sudden, hard shake, saying briskly, —

"Come, come, come, lazy-bones! Get up, get up!"

Papa started as if an earthquake had roused him, and stared at Harry, astonished for a minute, then he remembered, and upset Harry's gravity by whining out, —

"Come, you let me alone. It isn't time yet, and I am *so* tired."

Harry took the joke, and assuming the stern air of his father on such occasions, said impressively, —

"You have been called, and now if you are not down in fifteen minutes you won't have any breakfast. Not a morsel, sir, not a morsel;" and, coolly pocketing his father's watch, he retired, to giggle all the way downstairs.

When the breakfast bell rang, mamma hurried into the dining-room, longing for her tea. But Kitty sat behind the urn, and said gravely, —

"Go back, and enter the room properly. Will you never learn to behave like a lady?"

Mamma looked impatient at the delay, and having re-entered in her most elegant manner, sat down, and passed her plate for fresh trout and muffins.

"No fish or hot bread for you, my dear. Eat your good oatmeal porridge and milk; that is the proper food for children."

"Can't I have some tea?" cried mamma, in despair, for without it she felt quite lost.

"Certainly not. *I* never was allowed tea when a little girl, and couldn't think of giving it to you," said Kitty, filling a large cup for herself, and sipping the forbidden draught with a relish.

Poor mamma quite groaned at this hard fate, but meekly obeyed, and ate the detested porridge, understanding Kitty's dislike to it at last.

Harry, sitting in his father's chair, read the paper, and ate every thing he could lay his hands on, with a funny assumption of his father's morning manner. Aunt Betsey looked on much amused, and now and then nodded to the children as if she thought things were going nicely.

Breakfast was half over when papa came in, and was about to take Harry's place, when his son said, trying vainly to look grave as he showed the watch, —

"What did I tell you, sir? You are late again, sir. No breakfast, sir. I'm sorry, but this habit *must* be broken up. Not a word; it's your own fault, and you must bear the penalty."

"Come, now, that's hard on a fellow! I'm awful hungry. Can't I have just a bite of something?" asked papa, quite taken aback at this stern decree.

"I said not a morsel, and I shall keep my word. Go to your morning duties, and let this be a lesson to you."

Papa cast a look at Aunt Betsey, that was both comic and pathetic, and departed without a word; but he felt a sudden sympathy with his son, who had often been sent fasting from the table for some small offence.

Now it was that he appreciated aunty's kind heart, and felt quite fond of her, for in a few minutes she came to him, as he raked the gravel walk (Harry's duty every day), and slipping a nice, warm, well-buttered muffin into his hand, said, in her motherly way,—

"My dear, do try and please your father. He is right about late rising, but I can't bear to see you starve."

"Betsey, you are an angel!" and turning his back to the house, papa bolted the muffin with grateful rapidity, inquiring, with a laugh, "Do you think those rogues will keep it up in this vigorous style all day?"

"I trust so; it isn't a bit overdone. Hope you like it," and Aunt Betsey walked away, looking as if *she* enjoyed it extremely.

"Now put on your hat and draw baby up and down the avenue for half an hour. Don't go on the grass or you will wet your feet; and don't play with baby, I want her to go to sleep; and don't talk to papa or he will neglect his work," said Kitty, as they rose from table.

Now it was a warm morning and baby was heavy and the avenue was dull, and mamma much preferred to stay in the house and sew the trimming on to a new and pretty dress.

"Must I really? Kitty you are a hard-hearted mamma to make me do it," and Mrs. Fairbairn hoped her play-parent would relent.

But she did not, and only answered with a meaning look, —

"*I* have to do it every day and *you* don't let me off."

Mamma said no more, but put on her hat and trundled away with fretful baby, thinking to find her fellow-sufferer and have a laugh over the joke. She was disappointed, however, for Harry called papa away to weed the lettuce-bed, and then shut

him up in the study to get his lessons, while he mounted the pony and trotted away to town to buy a new fishing-rod and otherwise enjoy himself.

When mamma came in, hot and tired, she was met by Kitty with a bottle in one hand and a spoon in the other.

"Here is your iron mixture, dear. Now take it like a good girl."

"I won't!" and mamma looked quite stubborn.

"Then aunty will hold your hands and I shall make you."

"But I don't like it; I don't need it," cried mamma.

"Neither do I, but you give it to me all the same. I'm sure you need strengthening more than I do, you have so many 'trials,'" and Kitty looked very sly as she quoted one of the words often on her mother's lips.

"You'd better mind, Carrie; it can't hurt you, and you know you promised entire obedience. Set a good example," said aunty.

"But I never thought these little chits would do

so well. Ugh, how disagreeable it is!" And mamma took her dose with a wry face, feeling that Aunt Betsey was siding with the wrong party.

"Now sit down and hem these towels till dinner-time. I have so much to do I don't know which way to turn," continued Kitty, much elated with her success.

Rest of any sort was welcome, so mamma sewed busily till callers came. They happened to be some little friends of Kitty's, and she went to them in the parlor, telling mamma to go up to nurse and have her hair brushed and her dress changed, and then come and see the guests. While she was away Kitty told the girls the joke they were having, and begged them to help her carry it out. They agreed, being ready for fun and not at all afraid of Mrs. Fairbairn. So when she came in they all began to kiss and cuddle and praise and pass her round as if she was a doll, to her great discomfort and the great amusement of the little girls.

While this was going on in the drawing-room, Harry was tutoring his father in the study, and put-

ting that poor gentleman through a course of questions that nearly drove him distracted; for Harry got out the hardest books he could find, and selected the most puzzling subjects. A dusty old history was rummaged out also, and classical researches followed in which papa's memory played him false more than once, calling forth rebukes from his severe young tutor. But he came to open disgrace over his mathematics, for he had no head for figures, and not being a business man, had not troubled himself about the matter, so Harry, who was in fine practice, utterly routed him in mental arithmetic by giving him regular puzzlers, and when he got stuck offered no help, but shook his head and called him a stupid fellow.

The dinner-bell released the exhausted student, and he gladly took his son's place, looking as if he had been hard at work. He was faint with hunger, but was helped last, being "only a boy," and then checked every five minutes for eating too fast. Mamma was very meek, and only looked wistfully at the pie when told in her own words that pastry was bad for children.

Any attempts at conversation were promptly quenched by the worn-out old saying, "Children should be seen, not heard," while Harry and Kitty chattered all dinner-time, and enjoyed it to their heart's content, especially the frequent pecks at their great children, who, to be even with them, imitated all their tricks as well as they could.

"Don't whistle at table, papa;" "keep your hands still, mamma;" "wait till you are helped, sir;" "tuck your napkin well in, and don't spill your soup, Caroline."

Aunt Betsey laughed till her eyes were full, and they had a jolly time, though the little people had the best of it, for the others obeyed them in spite of their dislike to the new rules.

"Now you may play for two hours," was the gracious order issued as they rose from table.

Mamma fell upon a sofa exhausted, and papa hurried to read his paper in the shady garden.

Usually these hours of apparent freedom were spoilt by constant calls, — not to run, not to play this or that, or frequent calls to do errands. The chil-

dren had mercy, however, and left them in peace; which was a wise move on the whole, for the poor souls found rest so agreeable they privately resolved to let the children alone in their play-hours.

"Can I go over and see Mr. Hammond?" asked papa, wishing to use up the last half-hour of his time by a neighborly call.

"No; I don't like Tommy Hammond, so I don't wish you to play with his father," said Harry, with a sly twinkle of the eye, as he turned the tables on his papa.

Mr. Fairbairn gave a low whistle and retired to the barn, where Harry followed him, and ordered the man to harness up old Bill.

"Going to drive, sir?" asked papa, respectfully.

"Don't ask questions," was all the answer he got.

Old Bill was put into the best buggy and driven to the hall door. Papa followed, and mamma sprang up from her nap, ready for her afternoon drive.

"Can't I go?" she asked, as Kitty came down in her new hat and gloves.

"No; there isn't room."

"Why not have the carryall, and let us go, too, we like it so much," said papa, in the pleading tone Harry often used.

Kitty was about to consent, for she loved mamma, and found it hard to cross her so. But Harry was made of sterner stuff; his wrongs still burned within him, and he said impatiently, —

"We can't be troubled with you. The buggy is nicest and lightest, and we want to talk over our affairs. You, my son, can help John turn the hay on the lawn, and Caroline can amuse baby, or help Jane with the preserves. Little girls should be domestic."

"Oh, thunder!" growled papa.

"Aunt Betsey taught you that speech, you saucy boy," cried mamma, as the children drove off in high glee, leaving their parents to the distasteful tasks set them.

Mrs. Fairbairn wanted to read, but baby was fretful, and there was no Kitty to turn him over to, so she spent her afternoon amusing the small tyrant, while papa made hay in the sun and didn't like it.

Just at tea-time the children came home, full of the charms of their drive, but did not take the trouble to tell much about it to the stay-at-home people. Bread and milk was all they allowed their victims, while they revelled in marmalade and cake, fruit and tea.

"I expect company this evening, but I don't wish you to sit up, Caroline; you are too young, and late hours are bad for your eyes. Go to bed, and don't forget to brush your hair and teeth well, five minutes for each; cold cream your hands, fold your ribbons, hang up your clothes, put out your boots to be cleaned, and put in the mosquito bars; I will come and take away the light when I am dressed."

Kitty delivered this dread command with effect, for she had heard and cried over it too often not to have it quite by heart.

"But I can't go to bed at half-past seven o'clock of a summer night! I 'm not sleepy, and this is just the pleasantest time of the whole day," said mamma, thinking her bargain a hard one.

"Go up directly, my daughter, and don't discuss

the matter; I know what is best for you," and Kitty sent social, wide-awake mamma to bed, there to lie thinking soberly till Mrs. Kit came for the lamp.

"Have you had a happy day, love? "she asked, bending over the pillow, as her mother used to do.

"No, ma'am."

"Then it was your own fault, my child. Obey your parents in all things, and you will be both good and happy."

"That depends" — began mamma, but stopped short, remembering that to-morrow she would be on the other side, and any thing she might say now would be quoted against her.

But Kitty understood, and her heart melted as she hugged her mother and said in her own caressing way, —

"Poor little mamma! did she have a hard time? and didn't she like being a good girl and minding her parents?"

Mamma laughed also, and held Kitty close, but all she said was, —

"Good-night, dear; don't be troubled: it will be all right to-morrow."

"I hope so," and with a hearty kiss, Kitty went thoughtfully downstairs to meet several little friends whom she had asked to spend the evening with her.

As the ladies left the room, papa leaned back and prepared to smoke a cigar, feeling that he needed the comfort of it after this trying day. But Harry was down upon him at once.

"A very bad habit, — can't allow it. Throw that dirty thing away, and go and get your Latin lesson for to-morrow. The study is quiet, and we want this room."

"But I am tired. I can't study at night. Let me off till to-morrow, please, sir!" begged papa who had not looked at Latin since he left school.

"Not a word, sir! I shall listen to no excuses, and shall *not* let you neglect your education on any account," and Harry slapped the table *a la* papa in the most impressive manner.

Mr. Fairbairn went away into the dull study and made believe do his lesson, but he really smoked and meditated.

The young folks had a grand revel, and kept it up till ten o'clock, while mamma lay awake, longing to go down and see what they were about, and papa shortly fell asleep, quite exhausted by the society of a Latin Grammar.

"Idle boy, is this the way you study?" said Harry, audaciously tweaking him by the ear.

"No, it 's the way you do;" and feeling that his day of bondage was over, papa cast off his allegiance, tucked a child under each arm, and marched upstairs with them, kicking and screaming. Setting them down at the nursery door, he said, shaking his finger at them in an awful manner, —

"Wait a bit, you rascals, and see what you will get to-morrow."

With this dark threat he vanished into his own room, and a minute after a great burst of laughter set their fears at rest.

"It was a fair bargain, so I 'm not afraid," said Harry stoutly.

"He kissed us good-night though he did glower at us, so I guess it was only fun," added Kitty.

"Hasn't it been a funny day?" asked Harry.

"Don't think I quite like it, every thing is so turned round," said Kitty.

"Guess *they* didn't like it very well. Hear 'em talking in there;" and Harry held up his finger, for a steady murmur of conversation had followed the laughter in papa and mamma's room.

"I wonder if our joke will do any good?" said Kitty thoughtfully.

"Wait and see," answered Aunt Betsey, popping her night-capped head out of her room with a nod and a smile that sent them to bed full of hope for the future.

DANDELION.

DOWN by the sea lived Ben the fisherman, with his wife, and little son, who was called Dandelion, because he wore yellow pinafores, and had curly, yellow hair, that covered his head with a golden fuzz. A very happy family, for Ben was kind and industrious, Hetty, his wife, a cheerful, busy creature, and Dandelion the jolliest three-year-old baby who ever made sand-pies and paddled on the beach.

But one day a great trouble came to them. Ben and his fellow-fishermen sailed blithely away as usual, and Hetty watched the fleet of white-winged boats out of the bay, thinking how pretty they looked with the sunshine on them; while Dandelion stood clapping his chubby hands, and saying, as he always did, "Daddy tummin' soon." But Daddy did not come soon that time; for a great storm

arose, and when some of the boats came scudding home at nightfall, Ben's was not among them. All night the gale raged, and in the morning, Ben's boat lay empty and broken on the shore. His mates shook their heads when they saw the wreck, and drew their rough hands over their eyes; for Ben was a good seaman, and they knew he never would desert his boat alive. They looked for him far and wide, but could hear nothing of him, and felt sure that he had perished in the storm. They tried to comfort poor Hetty, but she would not be comforted. Her heart seemed broken; and if it had not been for her baby, her neighbors feared that she would have gone to join Ben in his grave under the sea. Dandelion didn't understand why every one was so sad, and why his father stayed away so long; but he never lost his cheerfulness, never gave up hoping, or stopped saying, with a contented smile, "Daddy tummin' soon." The sunshiny little face was Hetty's only comfort. The sight of the fuzzy yellow head, bobbing round the house, alone made it endurable; and the touch of the loving baby hands kept her

from the despair which made her long to end her sorrow in the sea.

People don't believe in fairies now-a-days; nevertheless, good spirits still exist, and help us in our times of trouble, better even than the little people we used to read about. One of these household spirits is called Love, and it took the shape of Dandelion, to comfort poor Hetty. Another is called Labor: a beautiful, happy spirit this is, and it did its part so well that there was little time for bitter thoughts or vain regrets; for Hetty's spinning-wheel must go, in order to earn bread for Dandelion, whose mouth was always ready for food, like a hungry bird's. Busily hummed the wheel; and, as it flew, it seemed to catch an echo of the baby's cheerful song, saying, over and over, "Daddy tummin' soon," till Hetty stopped crying as she worked, and listened to the cheerful whirr. "Yes, I shall see my good Ben again, if I wait patiently. Baby takes comfort in saying that, and I will, too; though the poor dear will get tired of it soon," she said.

But Dandelion didn't get tired. He firmly be-

lieved what he said, and nothing could change his mind. He had been much troubled at seeing the boat laid up on the beach, all broken and dismantled, but his little mind couldn't take in the idea of shipwreck and death; so, after thinking it over, he decided that Daddy was waiting somewhere for a new boat to be sent to bring him home. This idea was so strong that the child gathered together his store of toy-boats, — for he had many, as they were his favorite plaything, — and launched them, one after another, telling them to find his father, and bring him home.

As Dandelion was not allowed to play on the beach, except at low tide, the little boats sailed safely away on the receding waves, and the child was sure that some of them would get safely into the distant port where Daddy was waiting. All the boats were launched at last, all sailed bravely away; but none came back, and little Dandy was much disappointed. He babbled about it to himself; told the peeps and the horse-shoes, the snails and the lobsters, of his trouble; begged the gulls to fly away and find

Daddy; and every windy night, when the sea dashed on the shore and the shutters rattled, he would want the lamp put in the window, as it used to be when they expected Ben, and tried to make home look cheerful, even before he got there.

Hetty used to humor the child, though it made her heart ache to know that the light shone in vain. At such times Dandy would prance about the room in his little shirt, and talk about Daddy as happily as if long months had not passed without bringing him back. When fairly in his big, old-fashioned cradle, the boy would lie, looking more like a dandelion than ever, in his yellow flannel night-gown, playing with his toes, or rocking himself to and fro, calling the cradle his boat, and blithely telling his mother that he was sailing "far way to find Daddy." When tired of play, he lay still, and asked her to sing to him. She had no heart for the gay old sea-songs she used to sing for lullabies; so she sung hymns in her soft, motherly voice, till the blue eyes closed and the golden head lay still, looking so pretty, with the circle of bright hair above the rosy

face. "My little saint," Hetty called him; and though she often wept sadly as she watched him, the bitterness of her grief passed away, and a patient hope came to her; for the child's firm faith impressed her deeply, the pious music of the sweet old hymns comforted her sore heart, and daily labor kept her cheerful, in spite of herself. The neighbors wondered at the change that came over her, but she could not explain it; and no one knew that the three good spirits, called Love, Labor, and Hope, were working their pleasant miracles.

Six long months went by, and no one ever thought of seeing Ben again, — no one but his little son, who still watched for him here, and his wife, who waited to meet him hereafter.

One bright spring day something happened. The house was as tidy as ever; the wheel hummed briskly as Hetty sung softly to herself with a cheerful face, though there were white hairs among the brown, and her eyes had a thoughtful, absent look at times. Dandelion, more chubby and cheery than ever, sat at her feet, with the sunshine making a

golden glory of his yellow hair, as he tried his new boat in the tub of water his mother kept for her little sailor, or tugged away with his fat fingers at a big needle which he was trying to pull through a bit of cloth intended for a sail. The faithful little soul had not forgotten his father, but had come to the conclusion that the reason his boats never prospered was because they hadn't large enough sails; so he was intent on rigging a new boat lately given him, with a sail that could not fail to waft Ben safely home. With his mouth puckered up, his downy eyebrows knit, and both hands pulling at the big needle, he was so wrapped in his work that he did not mind the stopping of the wheel when Hetty fell into a reverie, thinking of the happy time when she and Ben should meet again. Sitting so, neither heard a step come softly over the sand; neither saw an eager, brown face peer in at the door; and neither knew, for a minute, that Ben was watching them, with a love and longing in his heart that made him tremble like a woman.

Dandelion saw him first; for, as he pulled the

thread through with a triumphant jerk, the small sailmaker lost his balance, tumbled over, and lay staring up at the tall man with his blue eyes so wide open, they looked as if they would never shut again. All of a sudden, he shouted, with a joyful shout, "Daddy's tummin'!" and the next instant, vanished, ship and all, in the arms of the man who wore the rough jacket. Over went the spinning-wheel, as Hetty vanished likewise; and for a time there was nothing but sobbing and kissing, clinging, and thanking Heaven for its kindness to them. When they grew quieter, and Ben got into his old chair, with his wife on one knee and his boy on the other, he told them how he was wrecked in the gale, picked up by an outward-bound ship, and only able to get back after months of sickness and delay.

"My boaty fetched him," said Dandelion, feeling that every thing had turned out just as he expected.

"So it did, my precious; leastways, your faith helped, I haven't a doubt," cried Hetty, hugging the curly-headed prophet close, as she told Ben all that had happened.

Ben didn't say much, but a few great tears rolled down the rough blue jacket, as he looked from the queer sail with its two big stitches to the little son, whose love, he firmly believed, had kept him safe through many dangers, and brought him home at last.

When the fine new boat was built, no one thought it strange that Ben named it "Dandelion;" no one laughed at the little sail which always hung over the fire-place in the small house; and long years after, when Ben was an old man, and sat by the door with his grandchildren on his knee, the story which always pleased them best was that which ended with the funny words, "Daddy tummin' soon."

MADAM CLUCK, AND HER FAMILY.

THERE never was a prouder mamma than Madam Cluck when she led forth her family of eight downy little chicks. Chanticleer, Strut, Snowball, Speckle, Peep, Peck, Downy, and Blot were their names; and no sooner were they out of the shell than they began to chirp and scratch as gayly as if the big world in which they suddenly found themselves was made for their especial benefit. It was a fine brood; but poor Madam Cluck had bad luck with her chicks, for they were her first, and she didn't know how to manage them. Old Aunt Cockletop told her that she didn't, and predicted that "those poor dears would come to bad ends."

Aunt Cockletop was right, as you will see, when I have told the sad history of this unfortunate family. The tragedy began with Chanty, who was the boldest little cockadoodle who ever tried to crow.

Before he had a feather to his bit of a tail, Chanty began to fight, and soon was known as the most quarrelsome chick in the farm-yard. Having picked his brothers and sisters, he tried to do the same to his playmates, the ducklings, goslings, and young turkeys, and was so disagreeable that all the fowls hated him. One day, a pair of bantams arrived, — pretty little white birds, with red crests and nice yellow feet. Chanty thought he could beat Mr. Bantam easily, he was so small, and invited him to fight. Mr. B. declined. Then Chanty called him a coward, and gave Mrs. B. a peck, which so enraged her spouse that he flew at Chanty like a game-cock, and a dreadful fight followed, which ended in Chanty's utter defeat, for he died from his wounds.

Downy and Snowball soon followed; for the two sweet little things would swing on the burdock-leaves that grew over the brook. Sitting side by side, the plump sisters were placidly swaying up and down over the clear brown water rippling below, when — ah! sad to relate — the stem broke, and down went leaf, chickens and all, to a watery death.

"I'm the most unlucky hen ever hatched!" groaned poor Madam Cluck; and it did seem so, for the very next week, Speckle, the best and prettiest of the brood, went to walk with Aunt Cockletop, "grasshoppering" they called it, in the great field across the road. What a nice time Speckle did have, to be sure; for the grasshoppers were lively and fat, and aunt was in an unusually amiable mood.

"Never run away from any thing, but face danger and conquer it, like a brave chick," said the old biddy, as she went clucking through the grass, with her gray turban wagging in the wind. Speckle had hopped away from a toad with a startled chirp, which caused aunt to utter that remark. The words had hardly left her beak, when a shadow above made her look up, give one loud croak of alarm, and then scuttle away, as fast as legs and wings could carry her.

Little Speckle, remembering the advice, and unconscious of the danger, stood her ground as a great hawk came circling nearer and nearer, till, with a sudden dart, he pounced on the poor chicken, and

bore it away chirping dismally, "Aunty told me not to run. Oh, dear! oh, dear! What shall I do?"

It was a dreadful blow to Mrs. Cluck; and Aunt Cockletop didn't show herself for a whole day after that story was known, for every fowl in the yard twitted her with the difference between her preaching and her practice.

Strut, the other son, was the vainest chick ever seen; and the great aim of his life was to crow louder than any other cock in the neighborhood. He was at it from morning till night, and every one was tired to death of hearing his shrill, small voice making funny attempts to produce hoarse little crows, as he sat on the wall and stretched his yellow neck, till his throat quite ached with the effort.

"Ah! if I could only fly to the highest beam in the barn, and give a splendid crow that every one could hear, I should be perfectly happy," said this silly little fowl, as he stared up at the loft where the old cock often sat.

So he tried every day to fly and crow, and at last

managed to get up; then how he did strut and rustle his feathers, while his playmates sat below and watched him.

"You'll fall and get hurt," said his sister Blot.

"Hold your tongue, you ugly little thing, and don't talk to me. I'm going to crow, and can't be interrupted by any silly bit of a hen. Be quiet, down there, and hear if I can't do it as well as daddy."

The chicks stopped scratching and peeping, and sat in a row to hear Strut crow. Perching himself on the beam, he tried his best, but only a droll "cock-a-doodle-doo" came of it, and all the chicks laughed. That made Strut mad, and he resolved to crow, even if he killed himself doing it. He gave an angry cluck, flapped his wings, and tried again. Alas, alas, for poor Strut! he leaned so far forward in his frantic effort to get a big crow out, that he toppled over and fell bump on the hard barn-floor, killing himself instantly.

For some time after this, Mrs. Cluck kept her three remaining little ones close to her side, watching over

them with maternal care, till they were heartily tired of her anxious cluckings. Peep and Peck were always together, being very fond of one another. Peep was a most inquisitive chicken, poking her head into every nook and corner, and never satisfied till she had seen all there was to see. Peck was a glutton, eating every thing she could find, and often making herself ill by gobbling too fast, and forgetting to eat a little gravel to help digest her food.

"Don't go out of the barn, children. I'm going to lay an egg, and can't look after you just now," said their mother one day.

"Yes, ma'am," chirped the chickens; and then, as she went rustling into the hay-mow, they began to run about and enjoy themselves with all their might. Peep found a little hole into the meal-room, and slipped in, full of joy at the sight of the bags, boxes, and bins. "I'll eat all I want, and then I'll call Peck," she said; and having taken a taste of every thing, she was about to leave, when she heard the stable-man coming, and in her fright couldn't find the hole, so flew into the meal-bin and hid herself.

Sam never saw her, but shut down the cover of the bin as he passed, and left poor Peep to die. No one knew what had become of her till some days later, when she was found dead in the meal, with her poor little claws sticking straight up, as if imploring help. Peck, meanwhile, got into mischief also; for, in her hunt for something good to eat, she strayed into the sheep-shed, and finding some salt, ate as much as she liked, not knowing that salt is bad for hens. Having taken all she wanted, she ran back to the barn, and was innocently catching gnats when her mamma came out of the hay-mow, with a loud "Cut-cut-cut-ca-dar-cut!"

"Where is Peep?" asked Mrs. Cluck.

"Don't know, ma. She" — there Peck stopped suddenly, rolled up her eyes, and began to stagger about as if she was tipsy.

"Mercy on us! What's the matter with the chick?" cried Mrs. Cluck, in great alarm.

"Fits, ma'am," answered Doctor Drake, who just then waddled by.

"Oh! what can I do?" screamed the distracted hen.

"Nothing, ma'am; it's fatal." And the doctor waddled on to visit Dame Partlet's son, who was ill of the pip.

"My child, my child! don't flap and stagger so! Let me hold you! Taste this mint-leaf! Have a drop of water! What shall I do?"

As poor Mrs. Cluck sighed and sobbed, her unhappy child went scuffling about on her back, gasping and rolling up her eyes in great anguish, for she had eaten too much of the fatal salt, and there was no help for her. When all was over, they buried the dead chicken under a currant-bush, covered the little grave with chickweed, and the bereaved parent wore a black string round her leg for a month.

Blot, "the last of that bright band," needed no mourning, for she was as black as a crow. This was the reason why her mother never had loved her as much as she did the others, who were all white, gray, or yellow. Poor little Blot had been much neglected by every one; but now her lonely mamma discovered how good and affectionate a chicken she was, for Blot was a great comfort to her, never running

away or disobeying in any way, but always close to her side, ready to creep under her wing, or bring her a plump bug when the poor biddy's appetite failed her. They were very happy together till Thanksgiving drew near, when a dreadful pestilence seemed to sweep through the farm-yard; for turkeys, hens, ducks, and geese fell a prey to it, and were seen by their surviving relatives, featherless, pale, and stiff, borne away to some unknown place whence no fowl returned. Blot was waked one night by a great cackling and fluttering in the hen-house, and peeping down from her perch, saw a great hand glide along the roost, clutch her beloved mother by the leg, and pull her off, screaming dolefully, "Good-by, good-by, my darling child!"

Aunt Cockletop pecked and croaked fiercely; but, tough as she was, the old biddy did not escape, and many another amiable hen and gallant cock-a-doodle fell a victim to that mysterious hand. In the morning few remained, and Blot felt that she was a forlorn orphan, a thought which caused her to sit with her head under her wing for several hours,

brooding over her sad lot, and longing to join her family in some safe and happy land, where fowls live in peace. She had her wish very soon, for one day, when the first snowflakes began to flutter out of the cold, gray sky, Blot saw a little kitten mewing pitifully as it sat under the fence.

"What is the matter, dear?" asked kind Blot.

"I'm lost, and I can't find my way home," answered the kitten, shivering with cold. "I live at the red farm-house over the hill, only I don't know which road to take."

"I'll show you. Come at once, for night is coming on, and the snow will soon be too deep for us," said Blot.

So away they went, as fast as their small legs could carry them; but it was a long way, and dusk came on before the red farm-house appeared.

"Now I'm safe; thank you very much. Won't you come in, and stay all night? My mother will be glad to see you," said the kit, rubbing her soft white face against Blot's little black breast.

"It's against the rule to stay out all night, and I

promised to be in early; so, good-by, dear." And off trotted Blot along the snowy road, hoping to get home before the hen-house door was shut. Faster and faster fell the snow, darker and darker grew the night, and colder and colder became poor Blot's little feet as she waded through the drifts. The firelight was shining out into the gloom, as the half-frozen chicken came into the yard, to find all doors shut, and no shelter left for her but the bough of a leafless tree. Too stiff and weak to fly up, she crept as close as possible to the bright glow which shone across the door-step, and with a shiver put her little head under her wing, trying to forget hunger, weariness, and the bitter cold, and wait patiently for morning. But when morning came, little Blot lay frozen stiff under a coverlet of snow; and the tender-hearted children sighed as they dug a grave for the last of the unfortunate family of the Clucks.

A CURIOUS CALL.

I HAVE often wondered what the various statues standing about the city think of all day, and what criticisms they would make upon us and our doings, if they could speak. I frequently stop and stare at them, wondering if they don't feel lonely; if they wouldn't be glad of a nod as we go by; and I always long to offer my umbrella to shield their uncovered heads on a rainy day, especially to good Ben Franklin, when the snow lies white on his benevolent forehead. I was always fond of this old gentleman; and one of my favorite stories when a little girl, was that of his early life, and the time when he was so poor he walked about Philadelphia with a roll of bread under each arm, eating a third as he went. I never pass without giving him a respectful look, and wishing he could know how grateful I am for all he had done in the printing

line; for, without types and presses, where would the books be?

Well, I never imagined that he understood why the tall woman in the big bonnet stared at him; but he did, and he liked it, and managed to let me know it in a very curious manner, as you shall hear.

As I look out, the first thing I see is the great gilt eagle on the City-Hall dome. There he sits, with open wings, all day long, looking down on the people, who must appear like ants scampering busily to and fro about an ant-hill. The sun shines on him splendidly in the morning; the gay flag waves and rustles in the wind above him sometimes; and the moonlight turns him to silver when she comes glittering up the sky. When it rains, he never shakes his feathers; snow beats on him without disturbing his stately repose; and he never puts his head under his wing at night, but keeps guard in darkness as in day, like a faithful sentinel. I like the big, lonely bird, call him my particular fowl, and often wish he'd turn his head and speak to me. One night he did actually do it, or seemed to; for I've never been

able to decide whether I dreamed what I'm going to tell you, or whether it really happened.

It was a stormy night; and, as I drew down my curtain, I said to myself, after peering through the driving snow to catch a glimpse of my neighbor, "Poor Goldy! he'll have a rough time of it. I hope this northeaster won't blow him off his perch." Then I sat down by my fire, took my knitting, and began to meditate. I'm sure I didn't fall asleep; but I can't prove it, so we'll say no more about it. All at once there came a tap at my door, as I thought; and I said "Come in," just as Mr. Poe did when that unpleasant raven paid him a call. No one came, so I went to see who it was. Not a sign of a human soul in the long hall, only little Jessie, the poodle, asleep on her mat. Down I sat; but in a minute the tap came again; this time so loud that I knew it was at the window, and went to open it, thinking that one of my doves wanted to come in perhaps. Up went the sash, and in bounced something so big and so bright that it dazzled and scared me.

"Don't be frightened, ma'am; it's only me," said a hoarse voice. So I collected my wits, rubbed my eyes, and looked at my visitor. It was the gold eagle off the City Hall! I don't expect to be believed; but I wish you'd been here to see, for I give you my word, it was a sight to behold. How he ever got in at such a small window I can't tell; but there he was, strutting majestically up and down the room, his golden plumage rustling, and his keen eyes flashing as he walked. I really didn't know what to do. I couldn't imagine what he came for; I had my doubts about the propriety of offering him a chair; and he was so much bigger than I expected that I was afraid he might fly away with me, as the roc did with Sinbad; so I did nothing but sidle to the door, ready to whisk out, if my strange guest appeared to be peckishly inclined. My respectful silence seemed to suit him; for, after a turn or two, he paused, nodded gravely, and said affably, "Good-evening, ma'am. I stepped over to bring you old Ben's respects, and to see how you were getting on."

"I'm very much obliged, sir. May I inquire who Mr. Old-Ben is? I'm afraid I haven't the honor of his acquaintance."

"Yes, you have; it's Ben Franklin, of City-Hall yard. You know him; and he wished me to thank you for your interest in him."

"Dear me! how very odd! Will you sit down, sir?"

"Never sit! I'll perch here;" and the great fowl took his accustomed attitude just in front of the fire, looking so very splendid that I couldn't keep my eyes off of him.

"Ah! you often do that. Never mind; I rather like it," said the eagle, graciously, as he turned his brilliant eye upon me. I was rather abashed; but being very curious, I ventured to ask a few questions, as he seemed in a friendly mood.

"Being a woman, sir, I'm naturally of an inquiring turn; and I must confess that I have a strong desire to know how it happens that you take your walks abroad, when you are supposed to be permanently engaged at home?"

He shrugged his shoulders, and actually winked at me, as he replied, "That's all people know of what goes on under, or rather over, their noses. Bless you, ma'am! I leave my roost every night, and enjoy myself in all sorts of larks. Excuse the expression; but, being ornithological, it is more proper for me than for some people who use it."

"What a gay old bird!" thought I, feeling quite at home after that. "Please tell me what you do, when the shades of evening prevail, and you go out for a frolic?"

"I am a gentleman; therefore I behave myself," returned the eagle, with a stately air. "I must confess, I smoke a great deal: but that's not my fault, it's the fault of the chimneys. They keep it up all day, and I have to take it; just as you poor ladies have to take cigar smoke, whether you like it or not. My amusements are of a wholesome kind. I usually begin by taking a long flight down the harbor, for a look at the lighthouses, the islands, the shipping, and the sea. My friends, the gulls, bring their reports to me; for they are the harbor-police, and I

take notes of their doings. The school-ship is an object of interest to me, and I often perch on the mast-head, to see how the lads are getting on. Then I take a turn over the city, gossip with the weathercocks, pay my compliments to the bells, inspect the fire-alarm, and pick up information by listening at the telegraph wires. People often talk about 'a little bird' who spreads news; but they don't know how that figure of speech originated. It is the sparrows sitting on the wires, who receive the electric shock, and, being hollow-boned, the news go straight to their heads; they then fly about, chirping it on the housetops, and the air carries it everywhere. That's the way rumors rise and news spread."

"If you'll allow, I'll make a note of that interesting fact," said I, wondering if I might believe him. He appeared to fall into a reverie, while I jotted down the sparrow story, and it occurred to me that perhaps I ought to offer my distinguished guest some refreshment; but, when I modestly alluded to it, he said, with an aldermanic air, "No, thank you; I've just dined at the Parker House."

Now, I really could *not* swallow that; and so plainly betrayed my incredulity, that the eagle explained. "The savory smells which rise to my nostrils from that excellent hotel, with an occasional sniff from the Tremont, are quite sufficient to satisfy my appetite; for, having no stomach, I don't need much food, and I drink nothing but water."

"I wish others would follow your example in that latter habit," said I, respectfully, for I was beginning to see that there was something in my bird, though he *was* hollow. "Will you allow me to ask if the other statues in the city fly by night?"

"They promenade in the parks; and occasionally have social gatherings, when they discuss politics, education, medicine, or any of the subjects in which they are interested. Ah! we have grand times when you are all asleep. It quite repays me for being obliged to make an owl of myself."

"Do the statues come from the shops to these parties?" I asked, resolving to take a late walk the next moonlight night.

"Sometimes; but they get lazy and delicate, liv-

ing in close, warm places. We laugh at cold and bad weather, and are so strong and hearty that I shouldn't be surprised if I saw Webster and Everett flying round the Common on the new-fashioned velocipedes, for they believed in exercise. Goethe and Schiller often step over from De Vries's window, to flirt with the goddesses, who come down from their niches on Horticultural Hall. Nice, robust young women are Pomona and Flora. If your niminy-piminy girls could see them run, they would stop tilting through the streets, and learn that the true Grecian Bend is the line of beauty always found in straight shoulders, well-opened chest, and an upright figure, firmly planted on active feet."

"In your rambles don't you find a great deal of misery?" said I, to change the subject, for he was evidently old-fashioned in his notions.

"Many sad sights!" And he shook his head with a sigh; then added, briskly, "But there is a deal of charity in our city, and it does its work beautifully. By the by, I heard of a very sweet charity the other day, — a church whose Sunday school is open to all

the poor children who will come; and there, in pleasant rooms, with books, pictures, kindly teachers, and a fatherly minister to welcome them, the poor little creatures find refreshment for their hungry souls. I like that; it's a lovely illustration of the text, 'Suffer little children to come unto me;' and *I* call it practical Christianity."

He did like it, my benevolent old bird; for he rustled his great wings, as if he wanted to clap them, if there had only been room; and every feather shone as if a clearer light than that of my little fire had fallen on it as he spoke.

"You are a literary woman, hey?" he said suddenly, as if he'd got a new idea, and was going to pounce upon me with it.

"Ahem! I do a little in that line," I answered, with a modest cough.

"Then tell people about that place; write some stories for the children; go and help teach them; do something, and make others do what they can to increase the Sabbath sunshine that brightens one day in the week for the poor babies who live in shady places."

"I should be glad to do my best; and, if I'd known before" — I began.

"You might have known, if you'd looked about you. People are so wrapped up in their own affairs they don't do half they might. Now, then, hand me a bit of paper, and I'll give you the address, so you won't have any excuse for forgetting what I tell you."

"Mercy on us! what will he do next?" thought I, as he tweaked a feather out of his breast, gave the nib a peck, and then coolly wrote these words on the card I handed him: "*Church of the Disciples. Knock, and it shall be opened!*" There it was, in letters of gold; and, while I looked at it, feeling reproached that I hadn't known it sooner, my friend, — he didn't seem a stranger any more, — said in a business-like tone, as he put back his pen, "Now I must be off. Old Ben reads an article on the 'Abuses of the Press at the present day,' and I must be there to report."

"It must be very interesting. I suppose you don't allow mortals at your meetings?" said I, burning to go, in spite of the storm.

"No, ma'am. We meet on the Common; and, in the present state of the weather, I don't thing flesh and blood would stand it. Bronze, marble, and wood, are sterner stuff, and can defy the elements."

"Good evening; pray, call again," I said, hospitably.

"I will; your eyrie suits me; but don't expect me to call in the daytime. I'm on duty then, and can't take my eye off my charge. The city needs a deal of watching, my dear. Bless me! it's striking eight. Your watch is seven minutes slow by the Old South. Good-night, good-night!"

And as I opened the window, the great bird soared away like a flash of light through the storm, leaving me so astonished at the whole performance that I haven't got over it yet.

TILLY'S CHRISTMAS.

"I'M so glad to-morrow is Christmas, because I'm going to have lots of presents."

"So am I glad, though I don't expect any presents but a pair of mittens."

"And so am I; but I shan't have any presents at all."

As the three little girls trudged home from school they said these things, and as Tilly spoke, both the others looked at her with pity and some surprise, for she spoke cheerfully, and they wondered how she could be happy when she was so poor she could have no presents on Christmas.

"Don't you wish you could find a purse full of money right here in the path?" said Kate, the child who was going to have "lots of presents."

"Oh, don't I, if I could keep it honestly!" and Tilly's eyes shone at the very thought.

"What would you buy?" asked Bessy, rubbing her cold hands, and longing for her mittens.

"I'd buy a pair of large, warm blankets, a load of wood, a shawl for mother, and a pair of shoes for me; and if there was enough left, I'd give Bessy a new hat, and then she needn't wear Ben's old felt one," answered Tilly.

The girls laughed at that; but Bessy pulled the funny hat over her ears, and said she was much obliged, but she'd rather have candy.

"Let's look, and may be we *can* find a purse. People are always going about with money at Christmas time, and some one may lose it here," said Kate.

So, as they went along the snowy road, they looked about them, half in earnest, half in fun. Suddenly Tilly sprang forward, exclaiming, —

"I see it! I've found it!"

The others followed, but all stopped disappointed; for it wasn't a purse, it was only a little bird. It lay upon the snow with its wings spread and feebly fluttering, as if too weak to fly. Its little feet were benumbed with cold; its once bright eyes were dull

with pain, and instead of a blithe song, it could only utter a faint chirp, now and then, as if crying for help.

"Nothing but a stupid old robin; how provoking!" cried Kate, sitting down to rest.

"I shan't touch it. I found one once, and took care of it, and the ungrateful thing flew away the minute it was well," said Bessy, creeping under Kate's shawl, and putting her hands under her chin to warm them.

"Poor little birdie! How pitiful he looks, and how glad he must be to see some one coming to help him! I'll take him up gently, and carry him home to mother. Don't be frightened, dear, I'm your friend;" and Tilly knelt down in the snow, stretching her hand to the bird with the tenderest pity in her face.

Kate and Bessy laughed.

"Don't stop for that thing; it's getting late and cold: let's go on and look for the purse," they said, moving away.

"You wouldn't leave it to die!" cried Tilly.

"I'd rather have the bird than the money, so I shan't look any more. The purse wouldn't be mine, and I should only be tempted to keep it; but this poor thing will thank and love me, and I'm *so* glad I came in time."

Gently lifting the bird, Tilly felt its tiny cold claws cling to her hand, and saw its dim eyes brighten as it nestled down with a grateful chirp.

"Now I've got a Christmas present after all," she said, smiling, as they walked on. "I always wanted a bird, and this one will be such a pretty pet for me."

"He'll fly away the first chance he gets, and die anyhow; so you'd better not waste your time over him," said Bessy.

"He can't pay you for taking care of him, and my mother says it isn't worth while to help folks that can't help us," added Kate.

"My mother says, 'Do as you'd be done by;' and I'm sure I'd like any one to help me if I was dying of cold and hunger. 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' is another of her sayings. This bird is my

little neighbor, and I'll love him and care for him, as I often wish our rich neighbor would love and care for us," answered Tilly, breathing her warm breath over the benumbed bird, who looked up at her with confiding eyes, quick to feel and know a friend.

"What a funny girl you are," said Kate; "caring for that silly bird, and talking about loving your neighbor in that sober way. Mr. King don't care a bit for you, and never will, though he knows how poor you are; so I don't think your plan amounts to much."

"I believe it, though; and shall do my part, any way. Good-night. I hope you'll have a merry Christmas, and lots of pretty things," answered Tilly, as they parted.

Her eyes were full, and she felt *so* poor as she went on alone toward the little old house where she lived. It would have been so pleasant to know that she was going to have some of the pretty things all children love to find in their full stockings on Christmas morning. And pleasanter still to have

been able to give her mother something nice. So many comforts were needed, and there was no hope of getting them; for they could barely get food and fire.

"Never mind, birdie, we'll make the best of what we have, and be merry in spite of every thing. *You* shall have a happy Christmas, any way; and I know God won't forget us, if every one else does."

She stopped a minute to wipe her eyes, and lean her cheek against the bird's soft breast, finding great comfort in the little creature, though it could only love her, nothing more.

"See, mother, what a nice present I've found," she cried, going in with a cheery face that was like sunshine in the dark room.

"I'm glad of that, dearie; for I haven't been able to get my little girl any thing but a rosy apple. Poor bird! Give it some of your warm bread and milk."

"Why, mother, what a big bowlful! I'm afraid you gave me all the milk," said Tilly, smiling over the nice, steaming supper that stood ready for her.

"I've had plenty, dear. Sit down and dry your wet feet, and put the bird in my basket on this warm flannel."

Tilly peeped into the closet and saw nothing there but dry bread.

"Mother's given me all the milk, and is going without her tea, 'cause she knows I'm hungry. Now I'll surprise her, and she shall have a good supper too. She is going to split wood, and I'll fix it while she's gone."

So Tilly put down the old tea-pot, carefully poured out a part of the milk, and from her pocket produced a great, plummy bun, that one of the school-children had given her, and she had saved for her mother. A slice of the dry bread was nicely toasted, and the bit of butter set by for her put on it. When her mother came in there was the table drawn up in a warm place, a hot cup of tea ready, and Tilly and birdie waiting for her.

Such a poor little supper, and yet such a happy one; for love, charity, and contentment were guests there, and that Christmas eve was a blither one

than that up at the great house, where lights shone, fires blazed, a great tree glittered, and music sounded, as the children danced and played.

"We must go to bed early, for we've only wood enough to last over to-morrow. I shall be paid for my work the day after, and then we can get some," said Tilly's mother, as they sat by the fire.

"If my bird was only a fairy bird, and would give us three wishes, how nice it would be! Poor dear, he can't give me any thing; but it's no matter," answered Tilly, looking at the robin, who lay in the basket with his head under his wing, a mere little feathery bunch.

"He can give you one thing, Tilly,—the pleasure of doing good. That is one of the sweetest things in life; and the poor can enjoy it as well as the rich."

As her mother spoke, with her tired hand softly stroking her little daughter's hair, Tilly suddenly started and pointed to the window, saying, in a frightened whisper,—

"I saw a face,—a man's face, looking in! It's gone now; but I truly saw it."

"Some traveller attracted by the light perhaps. I'll go and see." And Tilly's mother went to the door.

No one was there. The wind blew cold, the stars shone, the snow lay white on field and wood, and the Christmas moon was glittering in the sky.

"What sort of a face was it?" asked Tilly's mother, coming back.

"A pleasant sort of face, I think; but I was so startled I don't quite know what it was like. I wish we had a curtain there," said Tilly.

"I like to have our light shine out in the evening, for the road is dark and lonely just here, and the twinkle of our lamp is pleasant to people's eyes as they go by. We can do so little for our neighbors, I am glad to cheer the way for them. Now put these poor old shoes to dry, and go to bed, dearie; I'll come soon."

Tilly went, taking her bird with her to sleep in his basket near by, lest he should be lonely in the night.

Soon the little house was dark and still, and no one saw the Christmas spirits at their work that night.

When Tilly opened the door next morning, she gave a loud cry, clapped her hands, and then stood still, quite speechless with wonder and delight. There, before the door, lay a great pile of wood, all ready to burn, a big bundle and a basket, with a lovely nosegay of winter roses, holly, and evergreen tied to the handle.

"Oh, mother! did the fairies do it?" cried Tilly, pale with her happiness, as she seized the basket, while her mother took in the bundle.

"Yes, dear, the best and dearest fairy in the world, called 'Charity.' She walks abroad at Christmas time, does beautiful deeds like this, and does not stay to be thanked," answered her mother with full eyes, as she undid the parcel.

There they were, — the warm, thick blankets, the comfortable shawl, the new shoes, and, best of all, a pretty winter hat for Bessy. The basket was full of good things to eat, and on the flowers lay a paper saying, —

"For the little girl who loves her neighbor as herself."

"Mother, I really think my bird is a fairy bird, and all these splendid things come from him," said Tilly, laughing and crying with joy.

It really did seem so, for as she spoke, the robin flew to the table, hopped to the nosegay, and perching among the roses, began to chirp with all his little might. The sun streamed in on flowers, bird, and happy child, and no one saw a shadow glide away from the window; no one ever knew that Mr. King had seen and heard the little girls the night before, or dreamed that the rich neighbor had learned a lesson from the poor neighbor.

And Tilly's bird *was* a fairy bird; for by her love and tenderness to the helpless thing, she brought good gifts to herself, happiness to the unknown giver of them, and a faithful little friend who did not fly away, but stayed with her till the snow was gone, making summer for her in the winter-time.

MY LITTLE GENTLEMAN.

NO one would have thought of calling him so, this ragged, barefooted, freckle-faced Jack, who spent his days carrying market-baskets for the butcher, or clean clothes for Mrs. Quinn, selling chips, or grubbing in the ash-heaps for cinders. But he was honestly earning his living, doing his duty as well as he knew how, and serving those poorer and more helpless than himself, and that is being a gentleman in the best sense of that fine old word. He had no home but Mrs. Quinn's garret; and for this he paid by carrying the bundles and getting the cinders for her fire. Food and clothes he picked up as he could; and his only friend was little Nanny. Her mother had been kind to him when the death of his father left him all alone in the world; and when she, too, passed away, the boy tried to show his gratitude by comforting the little girl, who thought there was no one in the world like her Jack.

Old Mrs. Quinn took care of her, waiting till she was strong enough to work for herself; but Nanny had been sick, and still sat about, a pale, little shadow of her former self, with a white film slowly coming over her pretty blue eyes. This was Jack's great trouble, and he couldn't whistle it away as he did his own worries; for he was a cheery lad, and when the baskets were heavy, the way long, the weather bitter cold, his poor clothes in rags, or his stomach empty, he just whistled, and somehow things seemed to get right. But the day he carried Nanny the first dandelions, and she felt of them, instead of looking at them, as she said, with such pathetic patience in her little face, "I don't see 'em; but I know they're pretty, and I like 'em lots," Jack felt as if the blithe spring sunshine was all spoiled; and when he tried to cheer himself up with a good whistle, his lips trembled so they wouldn't pucker.

"The poor dear's eyes could be cured, I ain't a doubt; but it would take a sight of money, and who's agoing to pay it?" said Mrs. Quinn, scrubbing away at her tub.

"How much money?" asked Jack.

"A hundred dollars, I dare say. Dr. Wilkinson's cook told me once that he done something to a lady's eyes, and asked a thousand dollars for it."

Jack sighed a long, hopeless sigh, and went away to fill the water-pails; but he remembered the doctor's name, and began to wonder how many years it would take to earn a hundred dollars.

Nanny was very patient; but, by and by, Mrs. Quinn began to talk about sending her to some almshouse, for she was too poor to be burdened with a helpless child. The fear of this nearly broke Jack's heart; and he went about with such an anxious face that it was a mercy Nanny did not see it. Jack was only twelve, but he had a hard load to carry just then; for the thought of his little friend, doomed to lifelong darkness for want of a little money, tempted him to steal more than once, and gave him the first fierce, bitter feeling against those better off than he. When he carried nice dinners to the great houses and saw the plenty that prevailed there, he couldn't help feeling that it wasn't fair for

some to have so much, and others so little. When he saw pretty children playing in the park, or driving with their mothers, so gay, so well cared for, so tenderly loved, the poor boy's eyes would fill to think of poor little Nanny, with no friend in the world but himself, and he so powerless to help her.

When he one day mustered courage to ring at the great doctor's bell, begging to see him a minute, and the servant answered, gruffly, as he shut the door, "Go along! he can't be bothered with the like of you!" Jack clenched his hands hard as he went down the steps, and said to himself, with a most unboyish tone, "I'll get the money somehow, and *make* him let me in!"

He did get it, and in a most unexpected way; but he never forgot the desperate feeling that came to him that day, and all his life long he was very tender to people who were tempted in their times of trouble, and yielded, as he was saved from doing, by what seemed an accident.

Some days after his attempt at the doctor's, as he was grubbing in a newly-deposited ash-heap, with

the bitter feeling very bad, and the trouble very heavy, he found a dirty old pocket-book, and put it in his bosom without stopping to examine it; for many boys and girls were scratching, like a brood of chickens, all round him, and the pickings were unusually good, so no time must be lost. "Findings is havings" was one of the laws of the ash-heap haunters; and no one thought of disputing another's right to the spoons and knives that occasionally found their way into the ash-barrels; while bottles, old shoes, rags, and paper, were regular articles of traffic among them. Jack got a good basketful that day; and when the hurry was over sat down to rest and clear the dirt off his face with an old silk duster which he had picked out of the rubbish, thinking Mrs. Quinn might wash it up for a handkerchief. But he didn't wipe his dirty face that day; for, with the rag, out tumbled a pocket-book; and on opening it he saw — money. Yes; a roll of bills, with two figures on all of them, — three tens and one twenty. It took his breath away for a minute; then he hugged the old book tight in both his grimy hands,

and rocked to and fro all in a heap among the oyster-shells and rusty tin kettles, saying to himself, with tears running down his cheeks, "O Nanny! O Nanny! now I can do it!"

I don't think a basket of cinders ever travelled at such a rate before as Mrs. Quinn's did that day; for Jack tore home at a great pace, and burst into the room, waving the old duster, and shouting, "Hooray! I've got it! I've got it!"

It is no wonder Mrs. Quinn thought he had lost his wits; for he looked like a wild boy, with his face all streaked with tears and red ashes, as he danced a double-shuffle till he was breathless, then showered the money into Nanny's lap, and hugged her with another "Hooray!" which ended in a choke. When they got him quiet and heard the story, Mrs. Quinn rather damped his joy, by telling him the money wasn't his, and he ought to advertise it.

"But I want it for Nanny!" cried Jack; "and how can I ever find who owns it, when there was ever so many barrels emptied in that heap, and no one knows where they came from?"

"It's very like you won't find the owner, and you can do as you please; but it's honest to try, I'm thinking, for some poor girl may have lost her earn-in's this way, and we wouldn't like that ourselves," said Mrs. Quinn, turning over the shabby pocket-book, and carefully searching for some clue to its owner.

Nanny looked very sober, and Jack grabbed up the money as if it were too precious to lose. But he wasn't comfortable about it; and after a hard fight with himself he consented to let Mrs. Quinn ask their policeman what they should do. He was a kindly man; and when he heard the story, said he'd do what was right, and if he couldn't find an owner, Jack should have the fifty dollars back.

How hard it was to wait! how Jack thought and dreamed of his money, day and night! How Nanny ran to the door to listen when a heavy step came up the stairs! and how wistfully the poor darkened eyes turned to the light which they longed to see again.

Honest John Floyd did his duty, but he didn't

find the owner; so the old purse came back at last, and now Jack could keep it with a clear conscience. Nanny was asleep when it happened; and as they sat counting the dingy bills, Mrs. Quinn said to the boy, "Jack, you'd better keep this for yourself. I doubt if it's enough to do the child any good; and you need clothes and shoes, and a heap of things, let alone the books you hanker after so much. It ain't likely you'll ever find another wallet. It's all luck about Nanny's eyes; and maybe you are only throwing away a chance you'll never have again."

Jack leaned his head on his arms and stared at the money, all spread out there, and looking so magnificent to him that it seemed as if it could buy half the world. He did need clothes; his hearty boy's appetite did long for better food; and, oh! how splendid it would be to go and buy the books he had wanted so long, — the books that would give him a taste of the knowledge which was more enticing to his wide-awake young mind than clothes and food to his poor little body. It wasn't an easy thing to do; but he was so used to making small sacrifices that

the great one was less hard; and when he had brooded over the money a few minutes in thoughtful silence, his eye went from the precious bits of paper to the dear little face in the trundle-bed, and he said, with a decided nod, "I'll give Nanny the chance, and work for my things, or go without 'em."

Mrs. Quinn was a matter-of-fact body; but her hard old face softened when he said that, and she kissed him good-night almost as gently as if she'd been his mother.

Next day, Jack presented himself at Dr. Wilkinson's door, with the money in one hand and Nanny in the other, saying boldly to the gruff servant, "I want to see the doctor. I can pay; so you'd better let me in."

I'm afraid cross Thomas would have shut the door in the boy's face again, if it had not been for the little blind girl, who looked up at him so imploringly that he couldn't resist the mute appeal.

"The doctor's going out; but maybe he'll see you a minute;" and with that he led them into a room where stood a tall man putting on his gloves.

Jack was a modest boy; but he was so afraid that Nanny would lose her chance, that he forgot himself, and told the little story as fast as he could — told it well, too, I fancy; for the doctor listened attentively, his eye going from the boy's eager, flushed face, to the pale patient one beside him, as if the two little figures, shabby though they were, illustrated the story better than the finest artist could have done. When Jack ended, the doctor sat Nanny on his knee, gently lifted up the half-shut eyelids, and after examining the film a minute, stroked her pretty hair, and said so kindly that she nestled her little hand confidingly into his, "I think I can help you, my dear. Tell me where you live, and I'll attend to it at once, for it's high time something was done."

Jack told him, adding, with a manly air, as he showed the money, "I can pay you, sir, if fifty dollars is enough."

"Quite enough," said the doctor, with a droll smile.

"If it isn't, I'll work for the rest, if you'll trust me. Please save Nanny's eyes, and I'll do any

thing to pay you!" cried Jack, getting red and choky in his earnestness.

The doctor stopped smiling, and held out his hand in a grave, respectful way, as he said, "I'll trust you, my boy. We'll cure Nanny first; and you and I will settle the bill afterward."

Jack liked that; it was a gentlemanly way of doing things, and he showed his satisfaction by smiling all over his face, and giving the big, white hand a hearty shake with both his rough ones.

The doctor was a busy man; but he kept them some time, for there were no children in the fine house, and it seemed pleasant to have a little girl sit on his knee and a bright boy stand beside his chair; and when, at last, they went away, they looked as if he had given them some magic medicine, which made them forget every trouble they had ever known.

Next day the kind man came to give Nanny her chance. She had no doubt, and very little fear, but looked up at him so confidingly when all was ready, that he stooped down and kissed her softly before he touched her eyes.

"Let Jack hold my hands; then I'll be still, and not mind if it hurts me," she said. So Jack, pale with anxiety, knelt down before her, and kept the little hands steadily in his all through the minutes that seemed so long to him.

"What do you see, my child?" asked the doctor, when he had done something to both eyes, with a quick, skilful hand.

Nanny leaned forward, with the film all gone, and answered, with a little cry of joy, that went to the hearts of those who heard it, "Jack's face! I see it! oh, I see it!"

Only a freckled, round face, with wet eyes and tightly-set lips; but to Nanny it was as beautiful as the face of an angel; and when she was laid away with bandaged eyes to rest, it haunted all her dreams, for it was the face of the little friend who loved her best.

Nanny's chance was *not* a failure; and when she saw the next dandelions he brought her, all the sunshine came back into the world brighter than ever for Jack. Well might it seem so; for his fifty dollars

bought him many things that money seldom buys. The doctor wouldn't take it at first; but when Jack said, in the manful tone the doctor liked although it made him smile, "It was a bargain, sir. I wish to pay my debts; and I shan't feel happy if Nanny don't have it *all* for her eyes. Please do! I'd rather,"—then he took it; and Nanny did have it, not only for her eyes, but in clothes and food and care, many times over; for it was invested in a bank that pays good interest on every mite so given.

Jack discovered that fifty dollars was far less than most people would have had to pay, and begged earnestly to be allowed to work for the rest. The doctor agreed to this, and Jack became his errand-boy, serving with a willingness that made a pleasure of duty; soon finding that many comforts quietly got into his life; that much help was given without words; and that the days of hunger and rags, heavy burdens and dusty ash-heaps, were gone by for ever.

The happiest hours of Jack's day were spent in the doctor's chaise, when he made his round of visits;

for while he waited, the boy studied or read, and while they drove hither and thither, the doctor talked with him, finding an eager mind as well as a tender heart and a brave spirit under the rough jacket of his little serving-man. But he never called him that; for, remembering the cheerfulness, self-denial, honesty, and loyalty to those he loved, shown by the boy, the good doctor proved his respect for the virtues all men should covet, wherever they are found, and always spoke of Jack with a smile, as "My Little Gentleman."

BACK WINDOWS.

AS I sit working at my back window, I look out on a long row of other people's back windows; and it is quite impossible for me to help seeing and being interested in my neighbors. There are a good many children in those houses; and though I don't know one of their names, I know them a great deal better than they think I do. I never spoke a word to any of them, and never expect to do so; yet, I have my likes and dislikes among them, and could tell them things that they have said and done, which would astonish them very much, I assure you.

First, the babies, — for there are three: the aristocratic baby, the happy-go-lucky baby, and the forlorn baby. The aristocratic baby lives in a fine, well-furnished room, has a pretty little mamma, who wears white gowns, and pink ribbons in her

cap; likewise, a fond young papa, who evidently thinks *this* the most wonderful baby in Boston. There is a stout, motherly lady, who is the grandma, I fancy, for she is always hovering about "the dear" with cups, blankets, or a gorgeous red worsted bird to amuse it. Baby is a plump, rosy, sweet-faced little creature, always smiling and kissing its hand to the world in general. In its pretty white frocks, with its own little pink or blue ribbons, and its young mamma proudly holding it up to see and be seen, my aristocratic neighbor has an easy life of it, and is evidently one of the little lilies who do nothing but blossom in the sunshine.

The happy-go-lucky baby is just able to toddle; and I seldom pull up my curtain in the morning without seeing him at his window in his yellow flannel night-gown, taking a look at the weather. No matter whether it rains or shines, there he is, smiling and nodding, and looking so merry, that it is evident he has plenty of sunshine bottled up in his own little heart for private use. I depend on seeing him, and feel as if the world was not right

until this golden little sun rises to shine upon me. He don't seem to have any one to take care of him, but trots about all day, and takes care of himself. Sometimes he is up in the chambers with the girl, while she makes beds, and he helps; then he takes a stroll into the parlor, and spins the gay curtain-tassels to his heart's content; next, he dives into the kitchen (I hope he does not tumble downstairs, but I dare say he wouldn't mind if he did), and he gets pushed about by all the busy women, as they "fly round." I rather think it gets too hot for him there about dinner-time; for he often comes out into the yard for a walk at noon, and seems to find endless wonders and delights in the ash-barrel, the water-butt, two old flower-pots, and a little grass plat, in which he plants a choice variety of articles, in the firm faith they will come up in full bloom. I hope the big spoon and his own red shoe *will* sprout and appear before any trouble is made about their mysterious disappearance. At night I see a little shadow bobbing about on the curtain, and watch it, till, with a parting glimpse at a sleepy face at the

window, my small sun sets, and I leave him to his dreams.

The forlorn baby roars all day, and I don't blame him; for he is trotted, shaken, spanked, and scolded by a very cross nurse, who treats him like a meal-bag. I pity that little neighbor, and don't believe he will stand it long; for I see him double up his tiny fists, and spar away at nothing, as if getting ready for a good tussle with the world by and by, if he lives to try it.

Then the boys, — bless their buttons! — how amusing they are. One young man, aged about ten, keeps hens; and the trials of that boy are really pathetic. The biddies get out every day or two, and fly away all over the neighborhood, like feathers when you shake a pillow. They cackle and crow, and get up on sheds and fences, and trot down the streets, all at once, and that poor fellow spins round after them like a distracted top. One by one he gets them and comes lugging them back, upside down, in the most undignified attitude, and shuts them up, and hammers away, and thinks they are

all safe, and sits down to rest, when a triumphant crow from some neighboring shed tells him that that rascally black rooster is out again for another promenade. I'm not bloodthirsty; but I really do long for Thanksgiving, that my neighbor Hen-ry may find rest for the sole of his foot; for, not till his poultry are safely eaten will he ever know where they are.

Another boy has a circus about once a week, and tries to break his neck jumping through hoops, hanging to a rope by his heels, turning somersaults in the air, and frightening his mother out of her wits by his pranks. I suspect that he has been to see Leotard, and I admire his energy, for he is never discouraged; and, after tumbling flat, half-a-dozen times, he merely rubs his elbows and knees, and then up and takes another.

There is a good, domestic boy, who brushes and curls his three little sisters' hair every morning, and must do it very gently, for they seem to like it; and I often see them watch at the back gate for him, and clap their hands, and run to meet him, sure

of being welcomed as little sisters like to be met by the big brothers whom they love. I respect that virtuous boy.

The naughty boy is very funny; and the running fight he keeps up with the cross cook is as good as a farce. He *is* a torment, but I think she could tame him, if she took the right way. The other day she wouldn't let him in because she had washed up her kitchen and his boots were muddy. He wiped them on the grass, but that wouldn't do; and, after going at her with his head down, like a battering-ram, he gave it up, or seemed to; for, the minute she locked the door behind her and came out to take in her clothes, that sly dog whipped up one of the low windows, scrambled in, and danced a hornpipe all over the kitchen, while the fat cook scolded and fumbled for her key, for *she* couldn't follow through the window. Of course he was off upstairs by the time she got in; but I'm afraid he had a shaking, for I saw him glowering fiercely as he came out later with a basket, going some "confounded errand." Occasionally his father brings

him out and whips him for some extra bad offence, during which performance he howls dismally; but when he is left sitting despondently and miraculously on an old chair without any seat, he soon cheers up, boos at a strange cat, whistles to his dog, — who is just like him, — or falls back on that standing cure for all the ills that boys are heir to, and whittles vigorously. I know I ought to frown upon this reprehensible young person, and morally close my eyes to his pranks; but I really can't do it, and am afraid I find this little black sheep the most interesting of the flock.

The girls have tea-parties, make calls, and play mother, of course; and the sisters of the good boy have capital times up in a big nursery, with such large dollies that I can hardly tell which are the babies and which the mammas. One little girl plays about at home with a dirty face, tumbled hair, and an old pinafore on. She won't be made tidy, and I see her kick and cry when they try to make her neat. Now and then there is a great dressing and curling; and then I see her prancing away in

her light boots, smart hat, and pretty dress, looking as fresh as a daisy. But I don't admire her; for I've been behind the scenes, you see, and I know that she likes to be fine rather than neat.

So is the girl who torments her kitty, slaps her sister, and runs away when her mother tells her not to go out of the yard. But the housewifely little girl who tends the baby, washes the cups, and goes to school early with a sunshiny face and kiss all round, *she*, now, is a neighbor worth having, and I'd put a good mark against her name if I knew it.

I don't know as it would be proper for me to mention the grown-up people over the way. They go on very much as the children do; for there is the lazy, dandified man, who gets up late, and prinks; the cross man, who swears at the shed-door when it won't shut; the fatherly man, who sits among his children every evening; and the cheery old man up in the attic, who has a flower in his window, and looks out at the world with very much the same serene smile as my orange-colored baby.

The women, too, keep house, make calls, and play

mother; and some don't do it well either. The forlorn baby's mamma never seems to cuddle and comfort him; and some day, when the little fist lies cold and quiet, I'm afraid she'll wish she had. Then the naughty boy's mother. I'm very sure, if she put her arms round him sometimes, and smoothed that rough head of his, and spoke to him as only mothers can speak, that it would tame him far better than the scoldings and thrashings; for I know there is a true boy's heart, warm and tender, somewhere under the jacket that gets dusted so often. As for the fine lady who lets her children do as they can, while she trims her bonnet, or makes panniers, I wouldn't be introduced to her on any account. But as some might think it was unjustifiable curiosity on my part to see these things, and an actionable offence to speak of them, I won't mention them.

I sometimes wonder if the kind spirits who feel an interest in mortals ever take a look at us on the shady side which we don't show the world, seeing the trouble, vanities, and sins which we think no one knows. If they love, pity, or condemn us? What

records they keep, and what rewards they prepare for those who are so busy with their work and play that they forget who may be watching their back windows with clearer eyes and truer charity than any inquisitive old lady with a pen in her hand?

LITTLE MARIE OF LEHON.

"HERE comes our pretty little girl," I said to Kate, as we sat resting on the seat beside the footpath that leads from Dinan on the hill to Lehon in the valley.

Yes, there she was, trotting toward us in her round cap, blue woollen gown, white apron, and wooden shoes. On her head was a loaf of buckwheat bread as big as a small wheel, in one hand a basket full of green stuff, while the other led an old goat, who seemed in no hurry to get home. We had often seen this rosy, bright-eyed child, had nodded to her, but never spoken, for she looked rather shy and always seemed in haste. Now the sight of the goat reminded us of an excuse for addressing her, and as she was about to pass with the respectful little curtsey of the country, my friend said in French: —

"Stay, please. I want to speak to you." She stopped at once and stood looking at us under her long eyelashes in a timid, yet confiding way, very pretty to see.

"We want to drink goat's milk every morning: can you let us have it, little one?"

"Oh, yes, mademoiselle! Nannette gives fine milk, and no one has yet engaged her," answered the child, her whole face brightening at the prospect.

"What name have you?"

"Marie Rosier, mademoiselle."

"And you live at Lehon?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"Have you parents?"

"Truly, yes, of the best. My father has a loom, my mother works in the field and mill with brother Yvon, and I go to school and care for Nannette and nurse little Bebe."

"What school?"

"At the convent, mademoiselle. The good sisters teach us the catechism, also to write and read and sew. I like it much," and Marie glanced at the

little prayer in her apron pocket, as if proud to show she could read it.

"What age have you?"

"Ten years, mademoiselle."

"You are young to do so much, for we often see you in the market buying and selling, and sometimes digging in your garden there below, and bringing water from the river. Do you love work as well as school?"

"Ah, no; but mademoiselle knows it is necessary to work; every one does, and I am glad to do my part. Yvon works much harder than I, and the father sits all day at his loom, yet he is sick and suffers much. Yes, I am truly glad to help," and little Marie settled the big loaf as if quite ready to bear her share of the burdens.

"Shall we go and see your father about the goat? and if he agrees will you bring the milk fresh and warm every morning?" I asked, thinking that a sight of that blooming face would brighten our days for us.

"Oh, yes! I always do it for the ladies, and you

will find the milk quite fresh and warm, hey, Nannette?" and Marie laughed as she pulled the goat from the hedge where she was nibbling the young leaves.

We followed the child as she went clattering down the stony path, and soon came into the narrow street bounded on one side by the row of low, stone houses, and on the other by the green, wet meadow full of willows, and the rapid mill-stream. All along this side of the road sat women and children, stripping the bark from willow twigs to be used in basket-making. A busy sight and a cheerful one; for the women gossiped in their high, clear voices, the children sang and laughed, and the babies crept about as freely as young lambs.

We found Marie's home a very poor one. Only two rooms in the little hut, the lower one with its earthern floor, beds in the wall, smoky fire, and single window where the loom stood. At it sat a pale, dark man who stopped work as we entered, and seemed glad to rest while we talked to him, or rather while Kate did, for I could not understand

his odd French, and preferred to watch Marie during the making of the bargain.

Yvon, a stout lad of twelve, was cutting up brush with an old sickle, and little Bebe, looking like a Dutch doll in her tiny round cap, tight blue gown, and bits of sabots, clung to Marie as she got the supper.

I wondered what the children at home would have said to such a supper. A few cabbage leaves made the soup, and this, with the dry black bread and a sip of sour wine, was all they had. There were no plates or bowls, but little hollow places in the heavy wooden table near the edge, and into these fixed cups Marie ladled the soup, giving each a wooden spoon from a queer rack in the middle; the kettle stood at one end, the big loaf lay at the other, and all stood round eating out of their little troughs, with Nannette and a rough dog close by to receive any crusts that might be left.

Presently the mother came in, a true Breton woman; rosy and robust, neat and cheery, though her poor clothes were patched all over, her hands

more rough and worn with hard work than any I ever saw, and the fine hair under her picturesque cap gray at thirty with much care.

I saw then where Marie got the brightness that seemed to shine in every feature of her little face, for the mother's coming was like a ray of sunshine in that dark place, and she had a friendly word and look for every one.

Our little arrangement was soon made, and we left them all smiling and nodding as if the few francs we were to pay would be a fortune to them.

Early next morning we were wakened by Françoise the maid, who came up to announce that the goat's milk had arrived. Then we heard a queer, quick, tapping sound on the stairs, and to our great amusement, Nannette walked into the room, straight up to my bedside, and stood there looking at me with her mild yellow eyes as if she was quite used to seeing night-caps. Marie followed with a pretty little bowl in her hand, and said, laughing at our surprise, "See, dear mademoiselle; in this

way I make sure that the milk is quite fresh and warm;" and kneeling down, she milked the bowl full in a twinkling, while Nannette quietly chewed her cud and sniffed at a plate of rolls on the table.

The warm draught was delicious, and we drank each our portion with much merriment.

"It is our custom," said Françoise; who stood by with her arms folded, and looked on in a lofty manner.

"What had you for your own breakfast?" I asked, as I caught Marie's eye hungrily fixed on the rolls and some tempting little cakes of chocolate left from our lunch the day before.

"My good bread, as usual, mademoiselle, also sorrel salad and — and water," answered Marie, as if trying to make the most of her scanty meal.

"Will you eat the rolls and put the chocolate in your pocket to nibble at school? You must be tired with this long walk so early."

She hesitated, but could not resist; and said in a low tone, as she held the bread in her hand without eating it, —

"Would mademoiselle be angry if I took it to Bebe? She has never tasted the beautiful white bread, and it would please her much."

I emptied the plate into her basket, tucked in the chocolate, and added a gay picture for baby, which unexpected treasures caused Marie to clasp her hands and turn quite red with delight.

After that she came daily, and we had merry times with old Nannette and her little mistress, whom we soon learned to love, so busy, blithe, and grateful was she.

We soon found a new way to employ her, for the boy who drove our donkey did not suit us, and we got the donkey-woman to let us have Marie in the afternoon when her lessons were done. She liked that, and so did we; for she seemed to understand the nature of donkeys, and could manage them without so much beating and shouting as the boy thought necessary. Such pleasant drives as we had, we two big women in the droll wagon, drawn by the little gray donkey that looked as if made of an old trunk, so rusty and rough was he as he went trot-

ting along, his long ears wagging, and his small hoofs clattering over the fine, hard road, while Marie sat on the shaft with a long whip, talking and laughing, and giving Andrè a poke now and then, crying "E! E! houp la!" to make him go.

We found her a capital little guide and story-teller, for her grandmother had told her all the tales and legends of the neighborhood, and it was very pleasant to hear her repeat them in pretty peasant French, as we sat among the ruins, while Kate sketched, I took notes, and Marie held the big parasol over us.

Some of these stories were charming; at least as *she* told them, with her little face changing from gay to sad as she gesticulated most dramatically.

The romance of "Gilles de Bretagne" was one of her favorites. How he carried off his child-wife when she was only twelve, how he was imprisoned and poisoned, and at last left to starve in a dungeon, and would stand at his window crying, "Bread, bread; for the love of God!" yet no one dared to give him any, till a poor peasant woman went in

the night and gave him half her black loaf. Not once, but every night, for six months, though she robbed her children to do it. And when he was dying, it was she who took a priest to him that he might confess through the bars of his cell.

"So good, ah, so good, this poor woman! It is beautiful to hear of that, mademoiselle!" little Marie would say, with her black eyes full, and her lips trembling.

But the story she liked best of all was about the peasant girl and her grandmother.

"See then, dear ladies, it was in this way. In the time of the great war many poor people were shot because it was feared they would burn the chateaus. In one of these so sad parties being driven to St. Malo to be shot, was this young girl. Only fifteen, dear ladies, behold how young is this! and see the brave thing she did! With her went the old grandmother whom she loved next the good God. They went slowly, she was so old, and one of the officers who guarded them had pity on the pretty girl, and said to her as they were a little apart from the rest,

'Come, you are young and can run. I will save you; it is a pity so fine a little girl be shot.'

"Then she was glad and thanked him much, saying, 'And the grandmother also? You will save her with me?' 'It is impossible,' says the officer. 'She is too old to run. I can save but one, and her life is nearly over; let her go, and do you fly into the next wood. I will not betray you, and when we come up with the gang it will be too late to find you.'

"Then the great temptation of Satan came to this girl. She had no wish to suffer, but she could not leave the good old grandmere to die alone. She wept, she prayed, and the saints gave her courage.

"'No, I will not go,' she said; and in the morning at St. Malo she was shot with the old mother in her arms."

"Could you do that for your grandmere?" I once asked, as she stopped for breath, because this tale always excited her. She crossed herself devoutly, and answered with fire in her eyes and a resolute gesture of her little brown hands, —

"I should try, mademoiselle."

I think she would, and succeed, too, for she was a

brave and tender-hearted child, as she soon after proved.

A long drought parched the whole country that summer, and the gardens suffered much, especially the little plats in Lehon, for most of them were on the steep hillside behind the huts, and unless it rained water had to be carried up from the stream below. The cabbages and onions on which these poor people depend, when fresh salads are gone, were dying in the baked earth, and a hard winter was before them if this little store failed.

The priests prayed for rain in the churches, and long processions streamed out of the gates to visit the old stone cross called the "Croix de Saint Esprit," and, kneeling there in crowds, the people implored the blessing of rain to save their harvest. We felt great pity for them, but liked little Marie's way of praying best.

She did not come one morning, but sent her brother, who only laughed, and said Marie had hurt her foot, when we inquired for her. Anxious to know if she was really ill we went to see her in the afternoon,

and heard a pretty little story of practical Christianity.

Marie lay asleep on her mother's bed in the wall, and her father, sitting by her, told the tale in a low voice, pausing now and then to look at her, as if his little daughter had done something to be proud of.

It seems that in the village there was an old woman, frightfully disfigured by fire, and not quite sane as the people thought. She was harmless, but never showed herself by day, and only came out at night to work in her garden or take the air. Many of the ignorant peasants feared her, however, for the country abounds in fairy legends, and strange tales of ghosts and goblins. But the more charitable left bread at her door, and took in return the hose she knit or the thread she spun.

During the drought it was observed that *her* garden, though the steepest and stoniest, was never dry; *her* cabbages flourished when her neighbors' withered, and *her* onions stood up green and tall as if some special rain-spirit watched over them. People wondered and shook their heads, but could

not explain it, for Mother Lobineau was too infirm to carry much water up the steep path, and who would help her unless some of her own goblin friends did it?

This idea was suggested by the story of a peasant returning late at night, who had seen something white flitting to and fro in the garden-patch, and when he called to it saw it vanish most mysteriously. This made quite a stir in the town; others watched also, saw the white phantom in the starlight, and could not tell where it went when it vanished behind the chestnut trees on the hill, till one man, braver than the rest, hid himself behind these trees and discovered the mystery. The sprite was Marie, in her little shift, who stepped out of the window of the loft where she slept on to a bough of the tree, and thence to the hill, for the house was built so close against the bank that it was "but a step from garret to garden," as they say in Morlaix.

In trying to escape from this inquisitive neighbor, Marie hurt her foot, but was caught, and confessed that it was she who went at night to water poor Mother

Lobineau's cabbages; because if they failed the old woman might starve, and no one else remembered her destitute and helpless state.

The good-hearted people were much touched by this silent sermon on loving one's neighbor as one's self, and Marie was called the "little saint," and tended carefully by all the good women. Just as the story ended, she woke up, and at first seemed inclined to hide under the bedclothes. But we had her out in a minute, and presently she was laughing over her good deed, with a true child's enjoyment of a bit of roguery, saying in her simple way, —

"Yes; it was so droll to go running about *en chemise*, like the girl in the tale of the 'Midsummer Eve,' where she pulls the Saint Johnswort flower, and has her wish to hear all the creatures talk. I liked it much, and Yvon slept so like the dormouse that he never heard me creep in and out. It was hard to bring much water, but the poor cabbages were *so* glad, and Mother Lobineau felt that all had not forgotten her."

We took care that little Saint Marie was not

forgotten, but quite well, and all ready for her confirmation when the day came. This is a pretty sight, and for her sake we went to the old church of St. Sauveur to see it. It was a bright spring day, and the gardens were full of early flowers, the quaint streets gay with proud fathers and mothers in holiday dress, and flocks of strangers pausing to see the long procession of little girls with white caps and veils, gloves and gowns, prayer-books and rosaries, winding through the sunny square into the shadowy church with chanting and candles, garlands and crosses.

The old priest was too ill to perform the service, but the young one who took his place announced, after it was over, that if they would pass the house the good old man would bless them from his balcony. That was the best of all, and a sweet sight, as the feeble, fatherly old priest leaned from his easy-chair to stretch his trembling hands over the little flock so like a bed of snowdrops, while the bright eyes and rosy faces looked reverently up at him, and the fresh voices chanted the responses

as the curly heads under the long veils bowed and passed by.

We learned afterward that our Marie had been called in and praised for her secret charity, — a great honor, because the good priest was much beloved by all his flock, and took a most paternal interest in the little ones.

That was almost the last we saw of our little friend, for we left Dinan soon after, bidding the Lehon family good-by, and leaving certain warm souvenirs for winter-time. Marie cried and clung to us at parting, then smiled like an April day, and waved her hand as we went away, never expecting to see her any more.

But the next morning, just as we were stepping on board the steamer to go down the Rance to St. Malo, we saw a little white cap come bobbing through the market-place, down the steep street, and presently Marie appeared with two great bunches of pale yellow primroses and wild blue hyacinths in one hand, while the other held her sabots that she might run the faster. Rosy and

smiling and breathless with haste she came racing up to us, crying, —

"Behold my souvenir for the dear ladies. I do not cry now. No; I am glad the day is so fine. *Bon voyage! bon voyage!*"

We thanked and kissed and left her on the shore, bravely trying not to cry, as she waved her wooden shoes and kissed her hand till we were out of sight, and had nothing but the soft colors and sweet breath of our nosegays to remind us of Little Marie of Lehon.

MY MAY-DAY AMONG CURIOUS BIRDS AND BEASTS.

BEING alone in London, yet wishing to celebrate the day, I decided to pay my respects to the lions at the the Zoological Gardens. A lovely place it was, and I enjoyed myself immensely; for May-day in England is just what it should be, mild, sunny, flowery, and spring-like. As I walked along the well-kept paths, between white and rosy hawthorn hedges, I kept coming upon new and curious sights; for the birds and beasts are so skilfully arranged, that it is more like travelling through a strange and pleasant country than visiting a menagerie.

The first thing I saw was a great American bison; and I was so glad to meet with any one from home, that I'd have patted him with pleasure, if he had shown any cordiality toward me. He didn't, however, but stared savagely with his fiery eyes, and put

down his immense head with a sullen snort, as if he'd have tossed me with great satisfaction. I did not blame him, for the poor fellow was homesick, doubtless, for his own wide prairies and the free life he had lost. So I threw him some fresh clover, and went on to the pelicans.

I never knew before what handsome birds they were; not graceful, but with such snowy plumage, tinged with pale pink and faint yellow. They had just had their bath, and stood arranging their feathers with their great bills, uttering a queer cry now and then, and nodding to one another sociably. When fed, they gobbled up the fish, never stopping to swallow it till the pouches under their bills were full; then they leisurely emptied them, and seemed to enjoy their lunch with the grave deliberation of regular Englishmen.

Being in a hurry to see the lions, I went on to the long row of cages, and there found a splendid sight. Six lions and lionesses, in three or four different cages, sitting or standing in dignified attitudes, and eying the spectators with a mild expression in their

fine eyes. One lioness was ill, and lay on her bed, looking very pensive, while her mate moved restlessly about her, evidently anxious to do something for her, and much afflicted by her suffering. I liked this lion very much, for, though the biggest, he was very gentle, and had a noble face.

The tigers were rushing about, as tigers usually are; some creeping noiselessly to and fro, some leaping up and down, and some washing their faces with their velvet paws. All looked and acted so like cats, that I wasn't at all surprised to hear one of them purr when the keeper scratched her head. It was a very loud and large purr, but no fireside pussy could have done it better, and every one laughed at the sound.

There were pretty spotted leopards, panthers, and smaller varieties of the same species. I sat watching them a long time, longing to let some of the wild things out for a good run, they seemed so unhappy barred in those small dens.

Suddenly the lions began to roar, the tigers to snarl, and all to get very much excited about something, sniffing at the openings, thrusting their paws

through the bars, and lashing their tails impatiently. I couldn't imagine what the trouble was, till, far down the line, I saw a man with a barrow full of lumps of raw meat. This was their dinner; and, as they were fed but once a day, they were ravenous. Such roars and howls and cries as arose, while the man went slowly down the line, gave one a good idea of the sounds to be heard in Indian forests and jungles. The lions behaved best, for they only paced up and down, with an occasional cry; but the tigers were quite frantic; for they tumbled one over the other, shook the cages, and tried to reach the bystanders, just out of reach behind the bar that kept us at a safe distance. One lady had a fright, for the wind blew the end of her shawl within reach of a tiger's great claw, and he clutched it, trying to drag her nearer. The shawl came off, and the poor lady ran away screaming, as if a whole family of wild beasts were after her.

When the lumps of meat were thrown in, it was curious to see how differently the animals behaved. The tigers snarled and fought and tore and got

so savage I was very grateful that they were safely shut up. In a few minutes, nothing but white bones remained, and then they howled for more. One little leopard was better bred than the others, for he went up on a shelf in the cage, and ate his dinner in a quiet, proper manner, which was an example to the rest.

The lions ate in dignified silence, all but my favorite, who carried his share to his sick mate, and by every gentle means in his power tried to make her eat. She was too ill, however, and turned away with a plaintive moan which seemed to grieve him sadly. He wouldn't touch his dinner, but lay down near her, with the lump between his paws, as if guarding it for her; and there I left him patiently waiting, in spite of his hunger, till his mate could share it with him. As I took a last look at his fine old face, I named him Douglas, and walked away, humming to myself the lines of the ballad, —

"Douglas, Douglas,
Tender and true."

As a contrast to the wild beasts, I went to see the

monkeys who lived in a fine large house, all to themselves. Here was every variety, from the great ugly chimpanzee to the funny little fellows who played like boys, and cut up all sorts of capers. A mamma sat tending her baby, and looking so like a little old woman that I laughed till the gray monkey with the blue nose scolded at me. He was a cross old party, and sat huddled up in the straw, scowling at every one, like an ill-tempered old bachelor. Half a dozen little ones teased him capitally by dropping bits of bread, nut-shells, and straws down on him from above, as they climbed about the perches or swung by their tails. One poor little chap had lost the curly end of his tail, — I'm afraid the gray one bit it off, — and kept trying to swing like the others, forgetting that the strong, curly end was what he held on with. He would run up the bare boughs, and give a jump, expecting to catch and swing, but the lame tail wouldn't hold him, and down he'd go, bounce on to the straw. At first he'd sit and stare about him, as if much amazed to find himself there; then he'd scratch his

little round head, and begin to scold violently, which seemed to delight the other monkeys; and finally, he'd examine his poor little tail, and appear to understand the misfortune which had befallen him. The funny expression of his face was irresistible, and I enjoyed seeing him very much, and gave him a bun to comfort him when I went away.

The snake-house came next, and I went in, on my way to visit the rhinoceros family. I rather like snakes, since I had a tame green one, who lived under the doorstep, and would come out and play with me on sunny days. These snakes I found very interesting, only they got under their blankets and wouldn't come out, and I wasn't allowed to poke them; so I missed seeing several of the most curious. An ugly cobra laid and blinked at me through the glass, looking quite as dangerous as he was. There were big and little snakes, — black, brown, and speckled, lively and lazy, pretty and plain ones, — but I liked the great boa best.

When I came to his cage, I didn't see any thing but the branch of a tree, such as I had seen in other

cages, for the snakes to wind up and down. "Where is he, I wonder? I hope he hasn't got out," I said to myself, thinking of a story I read once of a person in a menagerie, who turned suddenly and saw a great boa gliding toward him. As I stood wondering if the big worm could be under the little flat blanket before me, the branch began to move all at once, and with a start, I saw a limb swing down to stare at me with the boa's glittering eyes. He was so exactly the color of the bare bough, and lay so still, I had not seen him till he came to take a look at me. A very villainous looking reptile he was, and I felt grateful that I didn't live in a country where such unpleasant neighbors might pop in upon you unexpectedly. He was kind enough to take a promenade and show me his size, which seemed immense, as he stretched himself, and then knotted his rough, grayish body into a great loop, with the fiery-eyed head in the middle. He was not one of the largest kind, but I was quite satisfied, and left him to his dinner of rabbits, which I hadn't the heart to stay and see him devour alive.

I was walking toward the camel's pagoda, when, all of a sudden a long, dark, curling thing came over my shoulder, and I felt warm breath in my face. "It's the boa!" I thought, and gave a skip which carried me into the hedge, where I stuck, much to the amusement of some children riding on the elephant whose trunk had frightened me. He had politely tried to tell me to clear the way, which I certainly had done with all speed. Picking myself out of the hedge, I walked beside him, examining his clumsy feet, and peering up at his small, intelligent eye. I'm very sure he winked at me, as if enjoying the joke, and kept poking his trunk into my pocket, hoping to find something eatable.

I felt as if I had got into a foreign country as I looked about me and saw elephants and camels walking among the trees; flocks of snow-white cranes stalking over the grass, on their long scarlet legs; striped zebras racing in their paddock; queer kangaroos hopping about, with little ones in their pouches; pretty antelopes chasing one another; and, in an immense wire-covered aviary, all sorts

of brilliant birds were flying about, as gaily as if at home.

One of the curiosities was a sea-cow, who lived in a tank of salt water, and came at the keeper's call to kiss him, and flounder on its flippers along the margin of the tank after a fish. It was very like a seal, only much larger, and had four fins instead of two. Its eyes were lovely, so dark and soft and liquid; but its mouth was not pretty, and I declined one of the damp kisses which it was ready to dispense at word of command.

The great polar bear lived next door, and spent his time splashing in and out of a pool of water, or sitting on a block of ice, panting, as if the mild spring day was blazing midsummer. He looked very unhappy, and I thought it a pity that they didn't invent a big refrigerator for him.

These are not half of the wonderful creatures I saw, but I have not room to tell more; only I advise all who can to pay a visit to the Zoological Gardens when they go to London, for it is one of the most interesting sights in that fine old city.

OUR LITTLE NEWSBOY.

HURRYING to catch a certain car at a certain corner late one stormy night, I was suddenly arrested by the sight of a queer-looking bundle lying in a door-way.

"Bless my heart, it's a child! O John! I'm afraid he's frozen!" I exclaimed to my brother, as we both bent over the bundle.

Such a little fellow as he was, in the big, ragged coat, such a tired, baby face, under the fuzzy cap, such a purple, little hand, still holding fast a few papers; such a pathetic sight altogether, was the boy, lying on the stone step, with the snow drifting over him, that it was impossible to go by.

"He is asleep; but he'll freeze, if left so long. Here! wake up, my boy, and go home, as fast as you can," cried John, with a gentle shake, and a very gentle voice; for the memory of a dear little lad,

safely tucked up at home, made him fatherly kind to the small vagabond.

The moment he was touched, the boy tumbled up, and, before he was half awake, began his usual cry, with an eye to business.

"Paper, sir? 'Herald!' 'Transkip!' Last"— a great gape swallowed up the "last edition," and he stood blinking at us like a very chilly young owl.

"I'll buy 'em all if you'll go home, my little chap; it's high time you were abed," said John, whisking the damp papers into one pocket, and his purse out of another, as he spoke.

"All of 'em?—why, there's six!" croaked the boy, for he was as hoarse as a raven.

"Never mind, I can kindle the fire with 'em. Put that in your pocket; and trot home, my man, as fast as possible."

"Where do you live?" I asked, picking up the fifty cents that fell from the little fingers, too benumbed to hold it.

"Mills Court, out of Hanover. Cold, ain't it?" said the boy, blowing on his purple hands, and hop-

ping feebly from one leg to the other, to take the stiffness out.

"He can't go all that way in this storm, — such a mite, and so used up with cold and sleep, John."

"Of course he can't; we'll put him in a car," began John; when the boy wheezed out, —

"No; I've got ter wait for Sam. He'll be along as soon's the theatre's done. He said he would; and so I'm waitin'."

"Who is Sam?" I asked.

"He's the feller I lives with. I ain't got any folks, and he takes care o' me."

"Nice care, indeed; leaving a baby like you to wait for him here such a night as this," I said crossly.

"Oh, he's good to me Sam is, though he does knock me round sometimes, when I ain't spry. The big fellers shoves me back, you see; and I gets cold, and can't sing out loud; so I don't sell my papers, and has to work 'em off late."

"Hear the child talk! One would think he was sixteen, instead of six," I said, half laughing.

"I'm 'most ten. Hi! ain't that a oner?" cried the boy, as a gust of sleet slapped him in the face, when he peeped to see if Sam was coming. "Hullo! the lights is out! Why, the play's done, and the folks gone, and Sam's forgot me."

It was very evident that Sam *had* forgotten his little *protégé;* and a strong desire to shake Sam possessed me.

"No use waitin' any longer; and now my papers is sold, I ain't afraid to go home," said the boy, stepping down like a little old man with the rheumatism, and preparing to trudge away through the storm.

"Stop a bit, my little Casabianca; a car will be along in fifteen minutes; and while waiting you can warm yourself over there," said John, with the purple hand in his.

"My name's Jack Hill, not Cassy Banks, please, sir," said the little party, with dignity.

"Have you had your supper, Mr. Hill?" asked John laughing.

"I had some peanuts, and two sucks of Joe's orange; but it warn't very fillin'," he said, gravely.

"I should think not. Here! one stew; and be quick, please," cried John, as we sat down in a warm corner of the confectioner's opposite.

While little Jack shovelled in the hot oysters, with his eyes shutting up now and then, in spite of himself, we looked at him, and thought again of little Rosy-face at home, safe in his warm nest, with mother-love watching over him. Nodding toward the ragged, grimy, forlorn, little creature, dropping asleep over his supper like a tired baby, I said, —

"Can you imagine our Freddy out alone at this hour, trying to 'work off' his papers, because afraid to go home till he has?"

"I'd rather not try," answered brother John, winking hard, as he stroked the little head beside him, which, by the by, looked very like a ragged, yellow door mat. I *think* brother John winked hard, but I can't be sure, for I know I did; and for a minute there seemed to be a dozen little newsboys dancing before my eyes.

"There goes our car; and it's the last," said John, looking at me.

"Let it go, but don't leave the boy;" and I frowned at John for hinting such a thing.

"Here is his car. Now, my lad, bolt your last oyster, and come on."

"Good-night, ma'am! thankee, sir!" croaked the grateful little voice, as the child was caught up in John's strong hands and set down on the car-step.

With a word to the conductor, and a small business transaction, we left Jack coiled up in a corner, to finish his nap as tranquilly as if it wasn't midnight, and a "knocking round" might not await him at his journey's end.

We didn't mind the storm much, as we plodded home; and when I told the story to Rosy-face, next day, his interest quite reconciled me to the sniffs and sneezes of a bad cold.

"If I saw that poor little boy, Aunt Jo, I'd love him lots!" said Freddy, with a world of pity in his beautiful child's eyes.

And, believing that others also would be kind to little Jack, and such as he, I tell the story.

When busy fathers hurry home at night, I hope

they'll buy their papers of the small boys, who get "shoved back;" the feeble ones, who grow hoarse, and can't "sing out;" the shabby ones, who, evidently, have only forgetful Sams to care for them; and the hungry-looking ones, who don't get what is "fillin'." For love of the little sons and daughters safe at home, say a kind word, buy a paper, even if you don't want it; and never pass by, leaving them to sleep forgotten in the streets at midnight, with no pillow but a stone, no coverlet but the pitiless snow, and not even a tender-hearted robin to drop leaves over them.

PATTY'S PATCHWORK.

"I PERFECTLY hate it! and something dreadful ought to be done to the woman who invented it," said Patty, in a pet, sending a shower of gay pieces flying over the carpet as if a small whirlwind and a rainbow had got into a quarrel.

Puss did not agree with Patty, for, after a surprised hop when the flurry came, she calmly laid herself down on a red square, purring comfortably and winking her yellow eyes, as if she thanked the little girl for the bright bed that set off her white fur so prettily. This cool performance made Patty laugh and say more pleasantly, —

"Well, it *is* tiresome, isn't it, Aunt Pen?"

"Sometimes; but we all have to make patchwork, my dear, and do the best we can with the pieces given us."

"Do we?" and Patty opened her eyes in great astonishment at this new idea.

"Our lives are patchwork, and it depends on us a good deal how the bright and dark bits get put together so that the whole is neat, pretty, and useful when it is done," said Aunt Pen soberly.

"Deary me, now she is going to preach," thought Patty; but she rather liked Aunt Pen's preachments, for a good deal of fun got mixed up with the moralizing; and she was so good herself that children could never say in their naughty little minds, "You are just as bad as we, so you needn't talk to us, ma'am."

"I gave you that patchwork to see what you would make of it, and it is as good as a diary to me, for I can tell by the different squares how you felt when you made them," continued Aunt Pen, with a twinkle in her eye as she glanced at the many-colored bits on the carpet.

"Can you truly? just try and see," and Patty looked interested at once.

Pointing with the yard-measure, Aunt Pen said, tapping a certain dingy, puckered, brown and purple square, —

"That is a bad day; don't it look so?"

"Well, it was, I do declare! for that was the Monday piece, when every thing went wrong and I didn't care how my work looked," cried Patty, surprised at Aunt Pen's skill in reading the calico diary.

"This pretty pink and white one so neatly sewed is a good day; this funny mixture of red, blue, and yellow with the big stitches is a merry day; that one with spots on it is one that got cried over; this with the gay flowers is a day full of good little plans and resolutions; and that one made of dainty bits, all stars and dots and tiny leaves, is the one you made when you were thinking about the dear new baby there at home."

"Why, Aunt Pen, you are a fairy! How *did* you know? they truly are just as you say, as near as I can remember. I rather like that sort of patchwork," and Patty sat down upon the floor to collect, examine, and arrange her discarded work with a new interest in it.

"I see what is going on, and I have queer plays in my mind just as you little folks do. Suppose you make this a moral bed-quilt as some people make

album quilts. See how much patience, perseverance, good nature, and industry you can put into it. Every bit will have a lesson or a story, and when you lie under it you will find it a real comforter," said Aunt Pen, who wanted to amuse the child and teach her something better even than the good old-fashioned accomplishment of needlework.

"I don't see how I can put that sort of thing into it," answered Patty, as she gently lifted puss into her lap, instead of twitching the red bit roughly from under her.

"There goes a nice little piece of kindness this very minute," laughed Aunt Pen, pointing to the cat and the red square.

Patty laughed also, and looked pleased as she stroked Mother Bunch, while she said thoughtfully, —

"I see what you mean now. I am making two kinds of patchwork at the same time; and this that I see is to remind me of the other kind that I don't see."

"Every task, no matter how small or homely, that

gets well and cheerfully done, is a fine thing; and the sooner we learn to use up the dark and bright bits (the pleasures and pains, the cares and duties) into a cheerful, useful life, the sooner we become real comforters, and every one likes to cuddle about us. Don't you see, deary?"

"That's what you are, Aunt Pen;" and Patty put up her hand to hold fast by that other strong, kind, helpful hand that did so much, yet never was tired, cold, or empty.

Aunt Pen took the chubby little one in both her own, and said, smiling, yet with meaning in her eyes, as she tapped the small forefinger, rough with impatient and unskilful sewing, —

"Shall we try and see what a nice little comforter we can make this month, while you wait to be called home to see mamma and the dear new baby?"

"Yes, I'd like to try;" and Patty gave Aunt Pen's hand a hearty shake, for she wanted to be good, and rather thought the new fancy would lend a charm to the task which we all find rather tiresome and hard.

So the bargain was made, and the patch Patty sewed that day was beautiful to behold; for she was in a delightfully moral state of mind, and felt quite sure that she was going to become a model for all children to follow, if they could. The next day her ardor had cooled a little, and being in a hurry to go out to play, she slighted her work, thinking no one would know. But the third day she got so angry with her patch that she tore it in two, and declared it was all nonsense to fuss about being good and thorough and all the rest of it.

Aunt Pen did not say much, but made her mend and finish her patch and add it to the pile. After she went to bed that night Patty thought of it, and wished she could do it over, it looked so badly. But as it could not be, she had a penitent fit, and resolved to keep her temper while she sewed, at any rate, for mamma was to see the little quilt when it was done, and would want to know all about it.

Of course she did not devote herself to being good *all* the time, but spent her days in lessons, play, mischief, and fun, like any other lively, ten-year-older.

But somehow, whenever the sewing-hour came, she remembered that talk; and as she worked she fell into the way of wondering whether Aunt Pen could guess from the patches what sort of days she had passed. She wanted to try and see, but Aunt Pen refused to read any more calico till the quilt was done: then, she said in a queer, solemn way, she should make the good and bad days appear in a remarkable manner.

This puzzled Patty very much, and she quite ached to know what the joke would be; meantime the pile grew steadily, and every day, good or bad, added to that other work called Patty's life. She did not think much about that part of it, but unconsciously the quiet sewing-time had its influence on her, and that little "conscience hour," as she sometimes called it, helped her very much.

One day she said to herself as she took up her work, "Now I'll puzzle Aunt Pen. She thinks my naughty tricks get into the patches; but I'll make this very nicely and have it gay, and then I don't see how she will ever guess what I did this morning."

Now you must know that Tweedle-dee the canary, was let out every day to fly about the room and enjoy himself. Mother Bunch never tried to catch him, though he often hopped temptingly near her. He was a droll little bird, and Patty liked to watch his promenades, for he did funny things. That day he had made her laugh by trying to fly away with a shawl, picking up the fringe with which to line the nest he was always trying to build. It was so heavy he tumbled on his back and lay kicking and pulling, but had to give it up and content himself with a bit of thread.

Patty was forbidden to chase or touch him at these times, but always felt a strong desire to have just one grab at him and see how he felt. That day, being alone in the dining-room, she found it impossible to resist; and when Tweedle-dee came tripping pertly over the table-cloth, cocking his head on one side with shrill chirps and little prancings, she caught him, and for a minute held him fast in spite of his wrathful pecking.

She put her thimble on his head, laughing to see

how funny he looked, and just then he slipped out of her hand. She clutched at him, missed him, but alas, alas! he left his little tail behind him. Every feather in his blessed little tail, I do assure you; and there sat Patty with the yellow plumes in her hand and dismay in her face. Poor Tweedle-dee retired to his cage much afflicted, and sung no more that day, but Patty hid the lost tail and never said a word about it.

"Aunt Pen is so near-sighted she won't mind, and maybe he will have another tail pretty soon, or she will think he is moulting. If she asks of course I shall tell her."

Patty settled it in that way, forgetting that the slide was open and Aunt Pen in the kitchen. So she made a neat blue and buff patch, and put it away, meaning to puzzle aunty when the reading-time came. But Patty got the worst of it, as you will see by and by.

Another day she strolled into the store-room and saw a large tray of fresh buns standing there. Now, it was against the rule to eat between meals, and

new hot bread or cake was especially forbidden. Patty remembered both these things, but could not resist temptation. One plump, brown bun, with a lovely plum right in the middle, was so fascinating it was impossible to let it alone; so Patty whipped it into her pocket, ran to the garden, and hiding behind the big lilac-bush, ate it in a great hurry. It was just out of the oven, and so hot it burned her throat, and lay like a live coal in her little stomach after it was down, making her very uncomfortable for several hours.

"Why do you keep sighing?" asked Aunt Pen, as Patty sat down to her work.

"I don't feel very well."

"You have eaten something that disagrees with you. Did you eat hot biscuits for breakfast?"

"No, ma'am, I never do," and Patty gave another little gasp, for the bun lay very heavily on both stomach and conscience just then.

"A drop or two of ammonia will set you right," and Aunt Pen gave her some. It did set the stomach right, but the conscience still worried her, for she

could not make up her mind to "fess" the sly, greedy thing she had done.

"Put a white patch in the middle of those green ones," said Aunt Pen, as Patty sat soberly sewing her daily square.

"Why?" asked the little girl, for aunty seldom interfered in her arrangement of the quilt.

"It will look pretty, and match the other three squares that are going at the corners of that middle piece."

"Well, I will," and Patty sewed away, wondering at this sudden interest in her work, and why Aunt Pen laughed to herself as she put away the ammonia bottle.

These are two of the naughty little things that got worked into the quilt; but there were good ones also, and Aunt Pen's sharp eyes saw them all.

At the window of a house opposite Patty often saw a little girl who sat there playing with an old doll or a torn book. She never seemed to run about or go out, and Patty often wondered if she was sick, she looked so thin and sober, and was so quiet.

Patty began by making faces at her for fun, but the little girl only smiled back, and nodded so good-naturedly that Patty was ashamed of herself.

"Is that girl over there poor?" she asked suddenly as she watched her one day.

"Very poor: her mother takes in sewing, and the child is lame," answered Aunt Pen, without looking up from the letter she was writing.

"Her doll is nothing but an old shawl tied round with a string, and she don't seem to have but one book. Wonder if she'd like to have me come and play with her," said Patty to herself, as she stood her own big doll in the window, and nodded back at the girl who bobbed up and down in her chair with delight at this agreeable prospect.

"You can go and see her some day if you like," said Aunt Pen, scribbling away.

Patty said no more then, but later in the afternoon she remembered this permission, and resolved to try if aunty would find out her good doings as well as her bad ones. So, tucking Blanche Augusta Arabella Maud under one arm, her best picture-book under

the other, and gathering a little nosegay of her own flowers, she slipped across the road, knocked, and marched boldly upstairs.

Mrs. Brown, the sewing-woman, was out, and no one there but Lizzie in her chair at the window, looking lonely and forlorn.

"How do you do? My name is Patty, and I live over there, and I've come to play with you," said one child in a friendly tone.

"How do you do? My name is Lizzie, and I'm very glad to see you. What a lovely doll!" returned the other child gratefully; and then the ceremony of introduction was over, and they began to play as if they had known each other for ever so long.

To poor Lizzie it seemed as if a little fairy had suddenly appeared to brighten the dismal room with flowers and smiles and pretty things; while Patty felt her pity and good-will increase as she saw Lizzie's crippled feet, and watched her thin face brighten and glow with interest and delight over book and doll and posy. "It felt good," as Patty said afterward; "sort of warm and comfortable in my heart,

and I liked it ever so much." She stayed an hour, making sunshine in a shady place, and then ran home, wondering if Aunt Pen would find that out.

She found her sitting with her hands before her, and such a sad look in her face that Patty ran to her, saying anxiously, —

"What's the matter, aunty? Are you sick?"

"No, dear; but I have sorrowful news for you. Come sit in my lap and let me tell you as gently as I can."

"Mamma is dead!" cried Patty, with a look of terror in her rosy face.

"No, thank God! but the dear, new baby only stayed a week, and we shall never see her in this world."

With a cry of sorrow Patty threw herself into the arms outstretched to her, and on Aunt Pen's loving bosom sobbed away the first bitterness of her grief and disappointment.

"Oh, I wanted a little sister so much, and I was going to be so fond of her, and was so glad she came, and now I can't see or have her even for a

day! I'm *so* disappointed I don't think I *can* bear it," sobbed Patty.

"Think of poor mamma, and bear it bravely for her sake," whispered Aunt Pen, wiping away her own and Patty's tears.

"Oh, dear me! there's the pretty quilt I was going to make for baby, and now it isn't any use, and I can't bear to finish it;" and Patty broke out afresh at the thought of so much love's labor lost.

"Mamma will love to see it, so I wouldn't give it up. Work is the best cure for sorrow; and I think you never will be sorry you tried it. Let us put a bright bit of submission with this dark trouble, and work both into your little life as patiently as we can, deary."

Patty put up her trembling lips, and kissed Aunt Pen, grateful for the tender sympathy and the helpful words. "I'll try," was all she said; and then they sat talking quietly together about the dear, dead baby, who only stayed long enough to make a place in every one's heart, and leave them aching when she went.

Patty did try to bear her first trouble bravely, and got on very well after the first day or two, except when the sewing-hour came. Then the sight of the pretty patchwork recalled the memory of the cradle it was meant to cover, and reminded her that it was empty now. Many quiet tears dropped on Patty's work; and sometimes she had to put it down and sob, for she had longed so for a little sister it was very hard to give her up, and put away all the loving plans she had made for the happy time when baby came. A great many tender little thoughts and feelings got sewed into the gay squares; and if a small stain showed here and there, I think they only added to its beauty in the eyes of those who knew what made them. Aunt Pen never suggested picking out certain puckered bits and grimy stitches, for she knew that just there the little fingers trembled, and the blue eyes got dim as they touched and saw the delicate, flowery bits left from baby's gowns.

Lizzie was full of sympathy, and came hopping over on her crutches with her only treasure, a black rabbit, to console her friend. But of all the comfort

given, Mother Bunch's share was the greatest and best; for that very first sad day, as Patty wandered about the house disconsolately, puss came hurrying to meet her, and in her dumb way begged her mistress to follow and see the fine surprise prepared for her. Four plump kits as white as snow, with four gray tails all wagging in a row, as they laid on their proud mamma's downy breast, while she purred over them with her yellow eyes full of supreme content.

It was in the barn, and Patty lay for an hour with her head close to Mother Bunch, and her hands softly touching the charming little Bunches, who squeaked and tumbled and sprawled about with their dim eyes blinking, their tiny pink paws fumbling, and their dear gray tails waggling in the sweetest way. Such a comfort as they were to Patty no words could tell, and nothing will ever convince me that Mrs. Bunch did not know all about baby, and so lay herself out to cheer up her little mistress like a motherly, loving old puss, as she was.

As Patty lay on the rug that evening while Aunt Pen sung softly in the twilight, a small, white figure

came pattering over the straw carpet, and dropped a soft, warm ball down by Patty's cheek, saying, as plainly as a loud, confiding purr could say it, —

"There, my dear, this is a lonely time for you, I know, so I've brought my best and prettiest darling to comfort you;" and with that Mother Bunch sat down and washed her face, while Patty cuddled little Snowdrop, and forgot to cry about baby.

Soon after this came a great happiness to Patty in the shape of a letter from mamma, saying she must have her little girl back a week earlier than they had planned.

"I'm sorry to leave you, aunty, but it is *so* nice to be wanted, and I'm all mamma has now, you know, so I must hurry and finish my work to surprise her with. How shall we finish it off? There ought to be something regularly splendid to go all round," said Patty, in a great bustle, as she laid out her pieces, and found that only a few more were needed to complete the "moral bed-quilt."

"I must try and find something. We will put this white star, with the blue round it, in the middle,

for it is the neatest and prettiest piece, in spite of the stains. I will sew in this part, and you may finish putting the long strips together," said Aunt Pen, rummaging her bags and bundles for something fine to end off with.

"I know! I've got something!" and away hurried Lizzie, who was there, and much interested in the work.

She came hopping back again, presently, with a roll in her hand, which she proudly spread out, saying, —

"There! mother gave me that ever so long ago, but I never had any quilt to use it for, and now it's just what you want. You can't buy such chintz now-a-days, and I'm *so* glad I had it for you."

"It's regularly splendid!" cried Patty, in a rapture; and so it was, for the pink and white was all covered with animals, and the blue was full of birds and butterflies and bees flying about as naturally as possible. Really lovely were the little figures and the clear, soft colors, and Aunt Pen clapped her hands, while Patty hugged her friend, and declared that the quilt was perfect now.

Mrs. Brown begged to be allowed to quilt it when the patches were all nicely put together, and Patty was glad to have her, for that part of the work was beyond her skill. It did not come home till the morning Patty left, and Aunt Pen packed it up without ever unrolling it.

"We will look at it together when we show it to mamma," she said; and Patty was in such a hurry to be off that she made no objection.

A pleasant journey, a great deal of hugging and kissing, some tears and tender laments for baby, and then it was time to show the quilt, which mamma said was just what she wanted to throw over her feet as she lay on the sofa.

If there *were* any fairies, Patty would have been sure they had done something to her bed-cover, for when she proudly unrolled it, what do you think she saw?

Right in the middle of the white star, which was the centre-piece, delicately drawn with indelible ink, was a smiling little cherub, all head and wings, and under it these lines, —

"While sister dear lies asleep,
Baby careful watch will keep."

Then in each of the four gay squares that were at the corners of the strip that framed the star, was a white bit bearing other pictures and couplets that both pleased and abashed Patty as she saw and read them.

In one was seen a remarkably fine bun, with the lines, —

"Who stole the hot bun
And got burnt well?
Go ask the lilac bush,
Guess it can tell."

In the next was a plump, tailless bird, who seemed to be saying mournfully, —

"My little tail, my little tail!
This bitter loss I still bewail;
But rather ne'er have tail again
Than Patty should deceive Aunt Pen."

The third was less embarrassing, for it was a pretty bunch of flowers so daintily drawn one could almost

think they smelt them, and these lines were underneath: —

"Every flower to others given,
Blossoms fair and sweet in heaven."

The fourth was a picture of a curly-haired child sewing, with some very large tears rolling down her cheeks and tumbling off her lap like marbles, while some tiny sprites were catching and flying away with them as if they were very precious: —

"Every tender drop that fell,
Loving spirits caught and kept;
And Patty's sorrow lighter grew
For the gentle tears she wept."

"Oh, aunty! what does it all mean?" cried Patty, who had looked both pleased and ashamed as she glanced from one picture to the other.

"It means, dear, that the goods and bads got into the bed-quilt in spite of you, and there they are to tell their own story. The bun and the lost tail, the posy you took to poor Lizzie, and the trouble you

bore so sweetly. It is just so with our lives, though we don't see it quite as clearly as this. Invisible hands paint our faults and virtues, and by and by we have to see them, so we must be careful that they are good and lovely, and we are not ashamed to let the eyes that love us best read there the history of our lives."

As Aunt Pen spoke, and Patty listened with a thoughtful face, mamma softly drew the pictured coverlet over her, and whispered, as she held her little daughter close, —

"My Patty will remember this; and if all her years tell as good a story as this month, I shall not fear to read the record, and she will be in truth my little comforter."

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